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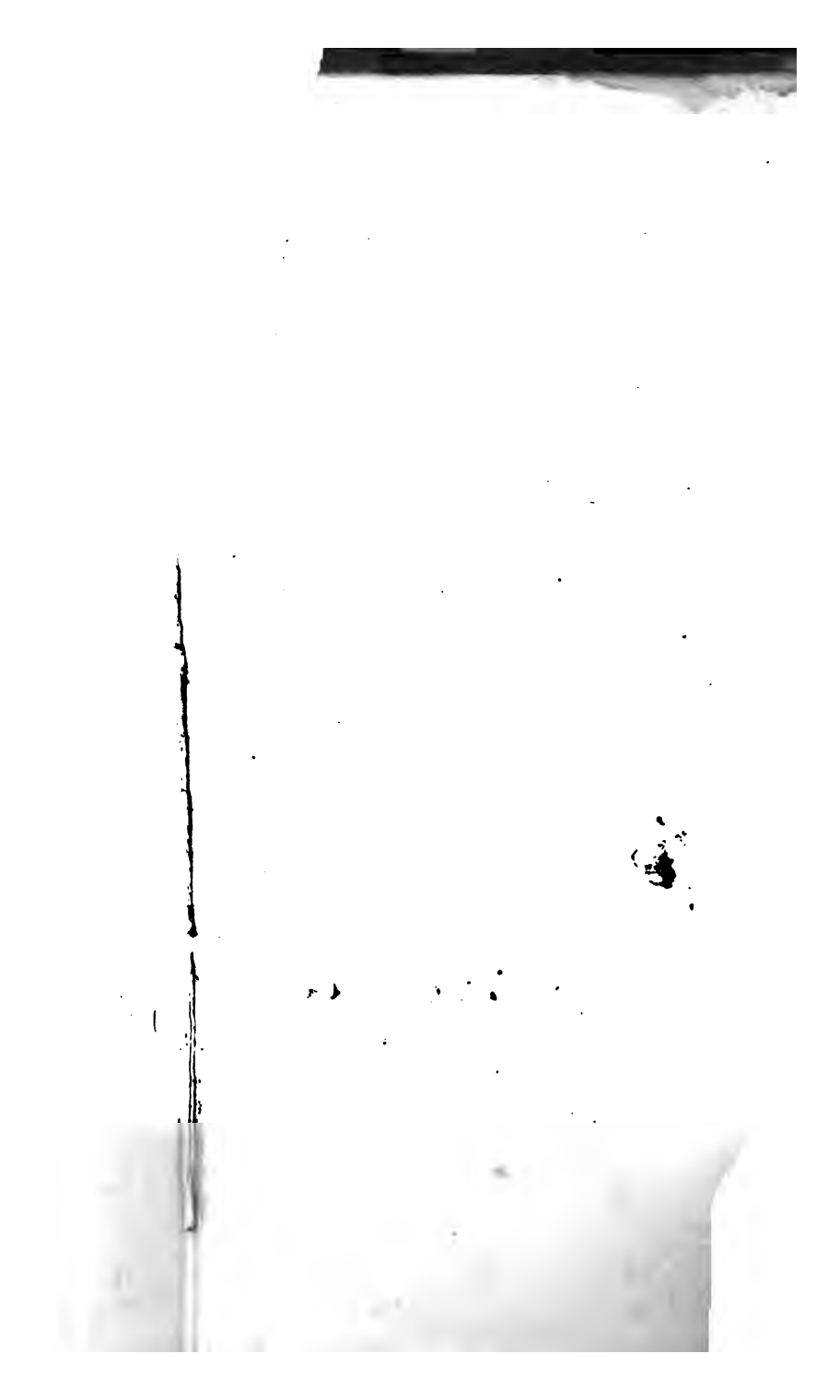

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Mrs. Devereux read, with a mixture of feelings, the marriage of F. Longdale, jun. Esq. to Miss Westall, eldest daughter of Charles Westall, Esq. of Cavendish-square, by special licence, and a heterogeneous description of the ceremony, and the splendid party to breakfast.

"If Bell," thought she, "had but been prudent, all this parade might have been hers. Here she is going to vegetate at Harrington, her beauty fading every day, and no hopes of an advantageous settlement; and my sister Branthwaite seems determined to live for ever."

In truth, Mrs. Devereux was urged to make this remark to herself by Mrs. Branthwaite's face being in a horizontal line with her own, full of simple gaiety, and flowers, and laughter — No hopes of her comfortable £1000 per annum coming to Bell—and Bell again—— Mrs. Devereux once hoped to marry her well*, but now even to marry her *pretty* well was almost out of the question.

* Married *well* means £10,000—*pretty* well £2000.

Belfield, Gower, Jackson, and sir James Iravyne, might, one of them at least, have been hers, but for her coquetry; and then her idle love for Erasmus Buckfield had been quite the common conversation in town; belles just coming, or come out, had no dislike to propagating the report, that the beautiful Miss Devereux had been in love with a *married man;* and then there were various exaggerations in the tale—that Miss Devereux had actually *known* of his being married at the time of her flirtation with him—that she never stirred out for three weeks, during which time she had been delirious, and incessantly kept calling on the name of Erasmus Buckfield—and, lastly, she left town because she apprehended she might meet Mr. Buckfield and his wife, and that it would be too much for her. Miss Dareall vowed, at a party, when *she* last saw Miss Devereux, she was *dreadfully* altered, and *miserably* out of spirits; and a Miss G—— L——, and lady Frances

Bedingworth, took that opportunity of observing there was certainly *something* particular, as they had engaged an *immense* number of friends to a rout, and they were all put off—nay, lady Frances had in her ridicule the *very* note Miss Devereux wrote to her; she believed it mentioned indisposition, or something which was always an excuse.

The note was produced in a moment.

Lady Frances undertook to read it to a little *select coterie*, in one of the recesses, to a few of her dear inseparables.

"Mrs. Devereux—(Ah! I dare say Miss Devereux was too *ill*)—is sorry to inform lady Frances Bedingworth her rout is unavoidably postponed, in consequence of her daughter's illness, which requires country air. Mrs. Devereux leaves town at the latest on Thursday morning, for Harrington Lodge, but she will certainly do herself the honour of calling on lady Frances Bedington before her departure."

"I did not think Miss Devereux so *very* handsome," said a young lady.

"Nor I," said lady Frances, scornfully.

"Her eyes were too large, and, I thought, too languishing," remarked another.

"And for my taste she was too tall," said a new-introduced diminutive girl.

"And as to her playing," said a scientific female performer, "it was very tame, very spiritless, and insipid to a degree—no execution."

"And did you ever see her on horseback?" inquired Miss Dareall, with a sarcastic laugh.

"Frequently, with that Mr. Buckfield," said lady Frances.

"What did you think of it?"

"Oh, horrible!"

"And she had but little grace in dancing," said a *prime* waltzer.

"Oh, none!"

"I once heard her read a stanza from Byron," said an *elocutionist*, "and her voice was monotonous to a degree."

Leaving these belles to profit by their conversation, we turn to the cause from whence sprung divers dissensions, cool-

nesses, and *cuts*, between Bell Devereux and Augusta Dareall, who, till the moment of the *fracas*, were dearly beloved, inseparable, congenial friends. The rupture did not take place in a moment, but many little trivial incidents gradually wore away every stamp of friendship; letters, notes, and drawings, were returned; secrets once confided were betrayed; and Miss Dareall absolutely returned a harplute, which Belvidera had positively given her, specifying she no longer wanted it, and therefore returned it to its rightful owner.

But now for the main spring of all this commotion.

Miss Dareall was small, not very elegantly formed, but was what the world termed *passable* — Miss Devereux, the reader is aware, was tall and graceful.

These two ladies, with several beaux, belles, and *chaperons*, went to see an exhibition of pictures in Pall-Mall. Miss Dareall was near-sighted *(conveniently* so sometimes, perhaps), but there was one

painting she was unable to see without getting on a bench near her.

Miss Devereux, jealous perhaps of the *show off* of Augusta's delicate ancle, which, it must be owned, rivalled hers, offered her eyeglass to her friend. It was refused, politely, so politely, that Belvidera need not have taken umbrage, unless she wished to quarrel with Miss Dareall; but so it was.

Immediately on Miss Dareall's declining the proffered eyeglass, Miss Devereux, pointing to her friend on the bench, said —"Pigmies are pigmies still, though placed on Alps."

Miss Dareall coloured angrily immediately, jumped off the bench, and turning to sir William Shelton, said, in a proud elevated tone of voice—"Sir William, I beg you will see me to my carriage."

"But you have not seen half," said sir William; "there's a Ven——"

"Likely I have not, but I must go.—Lady Greensward, Miss Tomlinson, colonel Harris, you will not disappoint me this

evening.—Miss Devereux, good-morning, ma'am."

We know not but what Miss Dareall might have forgiven Belvidera, had not her remark on pigmies, &c. raised a smile in the stone features of sir * Jehoshaphat Macfadeen, whom every one was trying, with all their might and main, to captivate, and it was seldom he ever smiled or talked, but that morning he did both to Bell Devereux.

Another provocative occurred — Miss Dareall had chosen a fine-toned harp—half-an-hour after she had bespoke it, Miss Devereux entered the shop, unluckily fixed on the same instrument, and on advancing five guineas more than what it had been offered to Miss Dareall for, became mistress of the harp, to the great indignation of Augusta.

Hostilities from this time commenced. Miss Devereux, the day after Miss Dareall's fancy dress-ball, received a note of apology, to say she was *forgotten*; and

* A real character.

the morning after Bell Devereux's concert, Miss Dareall received a billet, to specify the note of invitation addressed to her, requesting the honour of her company, had, in the hurry of preparation, been *mislaid.*" Each knew decidedly what the other meant, and each determined, for convenience' sake, not to cease exchanging visits entirely—to speak, be polite, and nothing more.

When Miss Dareall was with any dashers, whom she thought Bell would like to be introduced to, she regularly gave her *the cut*—was near-sighted or conveniently deaf—drove on fast—or merely nodded, and with a slight cool *disagreeable* curtsey passed on.

Miss Devereux visited Miss Dareall, because she saw plenty of beaux, some with stars and garters, and others of humbler rank, but with noble fortunes—Miss Dareall visited Miss Devereux, because she always had prime concerts, and prime singers, and gave elegant suppers, and sir

Jehoshaphat Macfadeen was always there.

We must now return, or rather go on, to Harrington Lodge, where the Devereuxes were; David uncomfortable and unhappy, resolving to turn over a new leaf with his establishment, which was extravagant to a degree, to sell his London house, to keep half the number of dogs and horses, and to become a new man.

He began and half completed his design before his mother was aware of his intention—she was coldly silent on the occasion. David was standing at the dining-room window, looking out, one afternoon, when turning abruptly round, he said—"He is gone!"

"Gone! who?" said Mrs. Devereux.

"My hunter Wildfire. I thought I could do very well with two, and I think Wildfire has a bad wind, after all."

"As that is the case, you do right, certainly."

David made no reply, being fully occupied in gazing after the fine animal he was going to part with, capering and

plunging for the last time down his park; after a pause he said—"You do not seem pleased, mother?"

"Pleased! why should I, at your parting with one of your favourite horses?"

In truth, David paused before he attempted to parry this reply.—"I thought you knew I was going to lessen my establishment?"

"Knew! no—who should tell me but yourself? and lately you have been unusually silent. I thought, perhaps, you would have waited till another winter had been over. Style and establishment go such a great way in a person's forming connexions."

"You allude to Bell; as for myself—but do not you think I *am* right?"

"You must do as you please."

"I please, then," said David, a little irritated by his mother's cold indifference, "to sell my house in Berkeley-square, to keep as few domestics as possible, and to retrench as far as in my power lies."

"Do so then."

"Yes, but I wish for your assent, mother."

"Oh! you have my assent."

"No, I have not—you are angry: but I *must!*"

"Well, if you must, why do you ask me for assent?"

"But, mother, do not you see the *necessity* of living within my income?"

"Necessity!—yes—perhaps—that is, if *you* really think there is a *real* necessity," said Mrs. Devereux, coldly.

"Necessity, mother! Do you think I would put myself to all the pain of retrenching?"

"Pain!"

"Yes, mother, pain—parting with my horses, my town-house, my——"

"Well, but the living—if you had but had the living."

"I *could* not be of the cloth—it went against my conscience; the remedy you offer, mother, would be worse than the disease."

"And yet——but I have done, David

act as you please; only Bell must see town again next winter, or nothing can be done."

"The speculation is a bad one," said David, after a pause.

"What speculation?"

"Oh, mother! *you* know."

"Ridiculous! you imagine such things. Bell will go off yet though, and well, I expect—she is *very* handsome."

"So she may be; why, then, if *all* consists in beauty, does not Miss Hazlitt, and Miss Jemima Leurd, and Miss Anabella Harrison, marry?"

"Oh! they are all *old* beauties. Bell will come out fresh next winter."

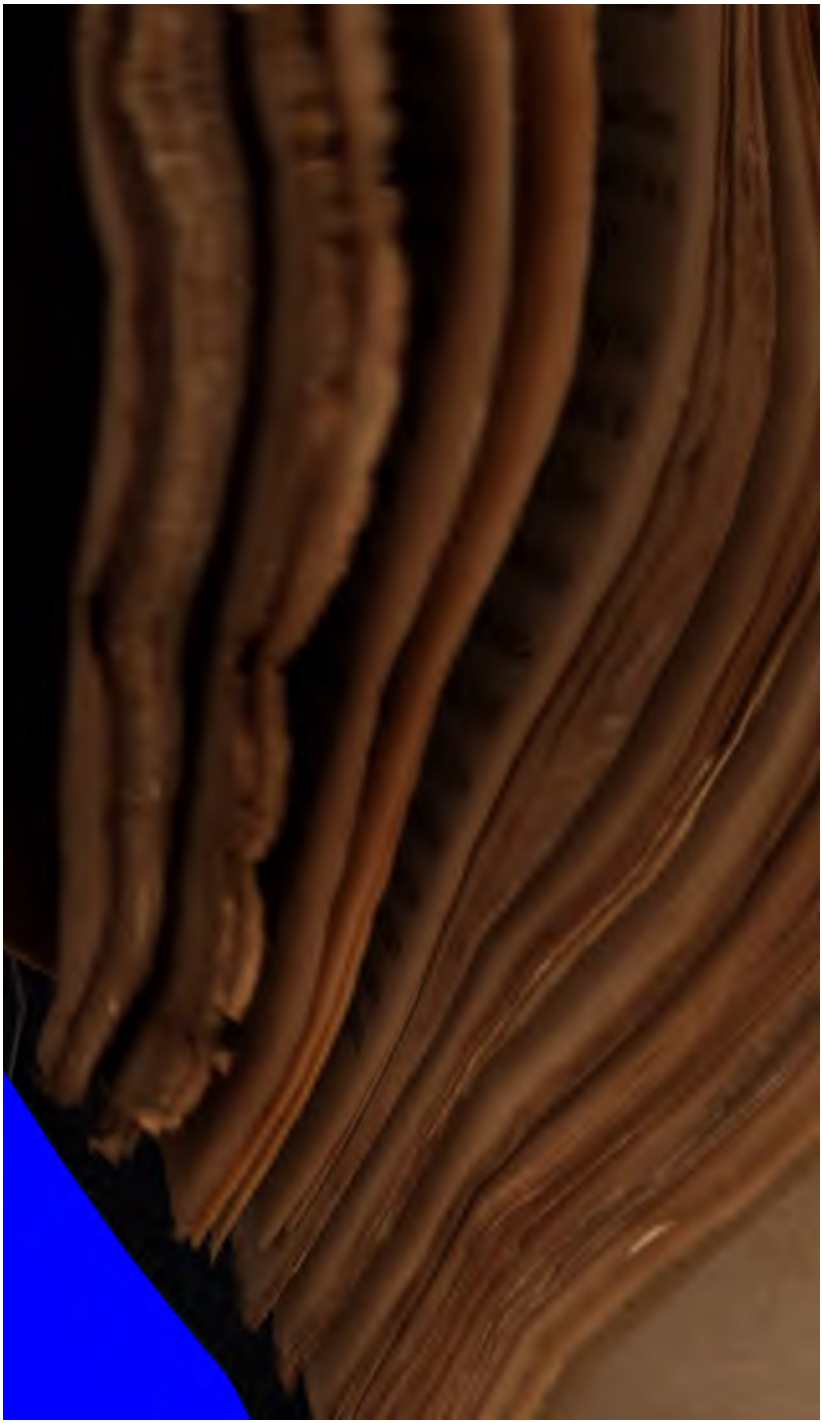
David thought different, but he remained silent.

"And then every one allows her playing is excellent."

"Very likely."

"And her voice is quite above the common run."

"Yes, but that wont get her off."



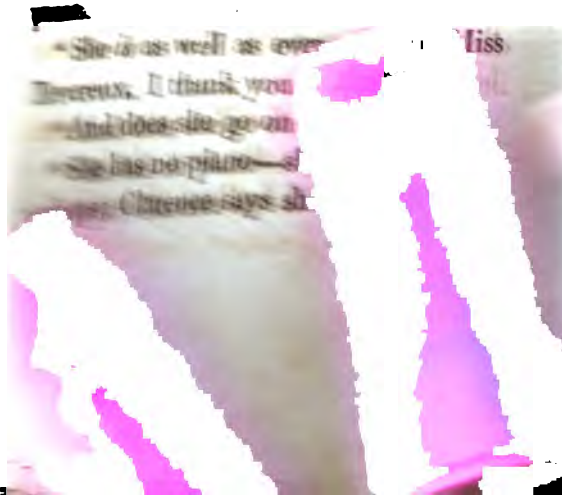
convince them report was wrong in saying *all* was retrenchment at Harrington Lodge.

Mrs. Plumptree was at home, and her eldest daughter — Isabel and Marianne had walked out with their brother.

"Oh, Mr. Clarence Plumptree!" said Miss Devereux; "I have not seen him these four years."

"Indeed! he is much altered"—"improved"—Mrs. Plumptree might have said; "he is, you know, a barrister; poor enough at present."

"*In the adversity of our best friends we find something which does not displease us.*" Let's see how testimony of this French maxim—"And Miss Isabel is looking as well as ever?" said she, after a pause.



mother said—"Bell, call at your aunt Branthwaite's, and leave those flowers."

The complying daughter replied—"Impossible—*wet* roses in pots!"

"Oh! but they could be set at the bottom of the chariot," Mrs. Devereux said.

But aunt Branthwaite's was two miles out of the way, and she wished for a *long* morning with the Plumptrees.

Mother and daughter each referred to their watches.—"It is now *only* eleven," said the mamma.

"It is *now* eleven," said the daughter, at the same moment.

"But the coachman could drive very fast—Bell, I *will* have them go."

And in ill humour Miss Belvidera was leaving the room, when Mrs. Branthwaite's man-servant making his appearance, saved the impending storm of sullenness from bursting forth.

Bell arrived at the Plumptrees, dashed up to the door in the new chariot, in a velvet pelisse and feathers, determined to

convince them report was wrong in saying *all* was retrenchment at Harrington Lodge.

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"*In the adversity of our best friends we find something which doth not displease us.*" Bell's face bore testimony of this French maxim.—"And Miss Isabel is looking as well as ever?" said she, after a pause.

"She *is* as well as ever, my dear Miss Devereux, I thank you!"

"And does she go on playing?"

"She has no piano—she will have one, perhaps; Clarence says she shall."

Belvidera was dying to know whether Isabella was engaged—"And is Mr. Elliott married yet?" she inquired.

"Mr. Elliott!—no."

And she was no wiser, for Mrs. Plumptree's open cheerful face changed not.

"He is a pleasant man?"—"Surely," thought Bell, "she will assent to that, and then I shall see how matters stand; I will go on sounding, however."

"Very well read—very pleasing," said Mrs. Plumptree, in the same tone of voice she had spoken in all along.

"And is he as fond of singing as ever, ma'am?"

"I did not know he was fond of it."

"Oh, very! I remember he liked Isabel's voice particularly."

Mrs. Plumptree was still, as usual, cheerful; but this speech made no *peculiar* impression.

"Mr. Elliott's new house at Southwood, have you seen it, ma'am."

"We have been all over it."

"This is *confirmation*," thought Bell.

Miss Plumptree entered, and the conversation revived. Bell staid till she could stay no longer—the call was certainly of an inordinate length.—"I must go, upon my word!" but she never rose from her chair.

"Oh! do not be in haste," said the ladies.

"And so you have been all over Mr. Elliott's? Pray what are the days for seeing the mansion—he has public ones, of course?" and she laughed.

"No, we went as friends," said Miss Plumptree.

"Friends!" and Bell laughed.

"Yes, nothing more indeed," said Mrs. Plumptree.

Bell once more had recourse to her countenance—certainly they were not engaged, if that told true.—"I wonder Mr. Elliott does not marry?"

"So do I; he appears quite a marrying man. Isabel, report——"

Bell listened with great attention.

"Isabel report has married several times to him."

"Well, ma'am, I should not think that so *very* improbable."

"Oh! nothing of that kind, indeed, my dear Miss Devereux."

And Bell breathed freely again.

At last she took her final good morning —should be happy to see them at any time at Harrington, to dinner, to tea, to call, and so forth—she had new music, new works, new books, very much at their service—was all smiles and graces—stepped into her carriage, and drove off.

"How improved!" said Miss Plumptree.

"Apparently so, indeed," said the mother; "I wish all this sunshine may last!"

CHAPTER II.

WE have sadly neglected Miss Higgins; but we have done her greater injustice than she has herself, for her endeavours have been to improve herself in every accomplishment Mrs. Harcourt deemed it wise and prudent for her to learn. For the edification of the Misses ——, we will tell them she was no waltzer; and also for the same reason we will inform the scientific ladies. M——, T——, and O——, she played only passing well; her voice certainly could boast no superior powers, or melodious sweetness, but was agreeable, and always exerted as soon as asked for*, which, let us tell the fair sex, is peculiarly

* We once were at a gentleman's house, where the eldest daughter was a *professed* fine player and singer, and after *four hours* entreaty, were gratified by an air slovenly and sullenly performed, the young lady declaring she never sung by *daylight!* So much for caprice!

gratifying. There is a difference between forwardness and caprice.

The advancing summer brought the Belfields back from town, Caroline bringing with her a lover—a Mr. Bentinck; every body said a very clever man, and every body wondered at his choice; but people do love against their better reasons sometimes. This might be Mr. Bentinck's case; certain it is, he had proposed for Miss Belfield, and had been accepted.

Bell Devereux was in agonies to see him—perfect agonies; and a party at Mrs. Harcourt's gave her the opportunity of gratifying her curiosity.

"What *shall* we amuse ourselves with?" said Caroline.

"Cards—would you like cards?" said Anna.

"Cards! oh no!"

"Music?"

"Oh, horrible!—Bentinck, what shall we do?"

"Whatever Miss Belfield pleases."

"Recite, *do* recite," exclaimed Miss Devereux.

"Well, I think I will," said Caroline, rising.

Mr. Bentinck looked blank.—"Surely *you* wont like to exhibit?" he said, seriously.

"Exhibit! ridiculous!—But I must have some drapery—Miss Higgins, a shawl or scarf will do—would you oblige me with one?"

Anna moved towards the door.

"You are not in earnest, Caroline?" said Mr. Bentinck.

"Earnest! to be sure I am."

"Earnest! why Miss Belfield performs delightfully," said Miss Devereux.

"I know she does almost every thing well. If she means to oblige *me*, she will not recite—at least not this evening."

"Idle—oblige *you!*" and Miss Belfield's countenance lowered.

"Yes, Caroline, oblige *me*."

"Just now I was to do whatever I pleased."

"True; but I did not imagine——"

"No, you did not imagine I should think of doing any thing conspicuous and ridiculous—did you now?"

"No."

Caroline slightly coloured at the firm answer of Mr. Bentinck, and put out her lip as he walked away—"Miss Higgins, will you favour me with a shawl? I will teaze him—it is delightful to torment."

"Oh, charming!" reechoed Miss Devereux.

And so it may be delightful to torment, to exult in wounding the feelings, and giving pain to a worthy man; to a heartless vain coquette all this may be very pleasureable, very delightful, as Miss Devereux said, very charming, and so on.

Mr. Bentinck sighed *deeply*—"You will really perform then?" turning back, half angry with himself.

"Yes—*exhibit*, you mean—to be sure. —Mr. Devereux, will *you* hand me down these steps?"

Mr. Bentinck did not look either jealous

or indignant, but followed several of the party into another room.

"Mr. Devereux, prompt me, pray.—Mr. Devereux, *do* dispose of the lights to advantage."

Bentinck still did not look jealous—pained he was, or might be, at Caroline's littleness, but no more; this was not the first time he had borne a little teazing, but it might be the last.

He was a man of sense and fortune, and during Caroline's winter campaign in town, had fallen in love with her, and her handsome face, for handsome she was, when her charms had undergone repairing at the toilet. It is true, she had dazzled him, and, hurried on by his evil genius, he had made her a proposal of marriage. Till she had him *fast bound*, she *was*, or rather *appeared* to be, all he could wish: by saying *fast bound*, we mean under the spell of her fascinations—*decidedly* over head and ears in love with her. That time was now come, and Caroline felt she might trifle a little—it would be easy to bring

him round again by a *smile*, or, if it was needed, a *tear*; and to quote her own words —"It was so delightful to torment—just to teaze a little." How often have these *bel-esprits* overshot the mark, and trifled, and teazed, and triumphed, till all their power was gone, of either triumphing, or teazing, or any thing else!

"Mr. Devereux, that light a little nearer," exclaimed Caroline, under the spell of the demon of coquetry; "no, further off—just there."

David assiduously moved the waxlight, as his fair instructress advised.

"Now, *you* prompt."

The book had to be passed through the hands of Mr. Bentinck; Caroline expected he would retain it, and prompt her, but no—he coldly gave it into the hands of David, and awaited the exhibition.

Caroline felt disappointed—nay more, mortified; however, she kept her smiles.

"What play?" asked David.

"Lovers' Vows," and she directed a

look at Mr. Bentinck. Lovers' Vows—the very one he objected to *strongly*.

He stood by the piano, for they were in the music-room; she saw no madness on his countenance; and during the time David was searching for the place in the book, he turned over some leaves of music—to hide his jealousy, Caroline thought, and she felt brightened up again, and began the part of Agatha, certainly to perfection. Mr. Devereux *read* the part of Frederic, and Miss Belfield undertook to correct his manner, by saying—"Now quick"—"Now spirited"—laying her hand on his arm, and endeavouring to rouse the jealousy, and pique Mr. Bentinck still more.

Due praises being rendered to Caroline from all *but* Mr. Bentinck, she took David's arm up the steps leading to the drawing-room.

"Miss Belfield, good-evening!" said Mr. Bentinck, distantly.

"Oh, are you going?" she said, carelessly—"Good-evening!"

"Yes—good-evening again!—I am off to Clermont."

"There! he's gone, finely mad—finely jealous!" said Caroline, turning to Belvidera, with a smile—a smile certainly merely to hide her mortification at the firm part Mr. Bentinck had been playing. "But I will soon bring him round. He is only gone to his aunt's, lady Hunter's; she will soon reason with him. He must see I *was* only *acting;* however, I am easy—*quite* easy, about it."

Not *quite* easy, perhaps; however, Miss Belfield kept up a sort of gaiety till the evening was over, and then got into the carriage with her brother.

"Bentinck is gone to Clermont," said Caroline, after they were seated.

"So he told me; I met him in the hall. A sudden thought rather."

Caroline struggled to speak carelessly—"Yes."

"He rallied me on being seated with the elderly ones at whist all the evening,

and said you"—Caroline scarcely breathed —" had been *performing!* and if he had been a sarcastic man, I should have thought he meant a great deal, because he said the word 'performing,' with a very peculiar emphasis."

" Indeed! he does not like it, I believe," said Caroline.

" Then I wonder you should do it: altogether he seemed angry, or hurt about something. He is a man of sense, and—"

" I know *that;* but we were all so stupid, and did not know how to live, so I performed the part of Agatha."

" Lovers' Vows then? why that was the play he objected to yesterday."

" Was it?"

" Yes, you cannot have forgotten, he spoke in such strong terms—for him very strong."

Caroline could not venture another word.

" Then Bentinck is gone, because you have offended him, I suppose."

" He came up, and bade me very civilly

good-night. I know not what he is angry at."

Belfield let down the glass as the carriage passed the Plumptrees' small white house, and forgot his sister's last words; he spoke not a syllable; but when they were out of sight, he drew the window up again.

Caroline felt no inclination to talk, neither did her brother, and in mutual silence they remained till they reached Dacresfield.

The next day Mr. Bentinck came not, nor wrote, nor sent; the following day the same; and a week elapsed. Miss Belfield thought of sending a few lines—then pride stopped her—then love reigned again, if hers could be called love; she wrote twenty notes, and then tore them to pieces; one was *too* cool, another too condescending, and so on. Sir John Hunter's was *only* six miles distant—if he had *chosen*, surely he might have come. But still he was a man of worth, of family, and to lose him was too much for human nature to bear: she *would* write, and did.

Answer came, that Mr. Bentinck was aware—nay, he was assured he was not the man calculated to make Miss Belfield happy—her own conduct had informed him so, therefore, of course, *he* yielded up all claim. It had given him pain, he acknowledged, to find himself so utterly mistaken in Miss Belfield, but she was aware, or must be aware, that he would not again intrude on her presence; and if chance led them together, they would meet as utter strangers; but Miss Belfield had Mr. Bentinck's wishes for her welfare, and he wished her happy, and so forth.

The affair was soon "blown" that Miss Belfield had lost her lover by coquetry; every body blamed *her*, of course; Bell Devereux was one of the first to be severe. As to the Plumptrees, they were *out* of the world, and if they had an opinion on the matter, it was not known. Another mortification quickly ensued—lady Hunter dropped Miss Belfield's acquaintance, and palpably neglected her at the Twickenham ball; and Isabel Plumptree was hanging

on her arm, absolutely looking uncommonly well, Mr. Elliot in close attendance, and several gentlemen declared, that Miss Plumptree was a precious fine girl—*one* of the finest in the room.

Mr. Elliott danced with Isabel, and Belfield led her out the next set, to the great surprise of every body, who thought it was *all off*. Miss Belfield thought her brother mad, nor did she scruple to say so. She was just repeating this declaration, when Mr. Bentinck entered. Miss Belfield never looked better, nor more pleasing, nor was more agreeable, but all would not do; he bowed to her as he would to a distant acquaintance, a id passed on, to others perhaps less fair, but more to his taste.

Isabel and Belfield danced together.—"You are as fond of dancing as ever?" he said, as he was leading her down the set.

"Oh, yes! I enjoy it, and admire it—I always did."

"And *your* taste has not changed then—in *dancing*, I mean?"

"No."

"But it has in many other things?"

"Yes, many," and Isabel spoke frankly.

Their conversation was interrupted by separating in the figure.

"Speaking of your taste," said Belfield, when they met, "it is changed, you say?"

"Our circumstances are changed."

"You all have borne that nobly," thought Belfield, but he remained silent.

"Mr. Elliott visits you a great deal," and Belfield began to *sound*.

"Altogether, since my brother has been with us."

Belfield consulted Isabel's countenance, but could learn nothing from it. He led her to a seat away from the dancers, as she complained of being tired, and seated himself beside her.—"You must think me very inconsistent."

"I *have* thought you inconsistent, certainly," and she paused; but Belfield could have wished her to be more, *much* more, interested in what he said, than she appeared to be.

"You are with lady Hunter, I think?"

"I am staying there—yes."

"I dine with sir John to-morrow."

"Do you?"

Belfield had known the time when Isabel would have said—"Oh! I am so glad, or so rejoiced," or her countenance would have said it, if her lips had not moved.

"Will *you* be there?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Then I shall find my visit *very* agreeable."

Isabel laughed incredulously.

"You disbelieve me?"

"The words you used were words of course; but here comes Mr. Elliott, to dance with me by pre-engagement."

Belfield rose to look at the dancers. Isabel danced with all her life and soul. His pride began—nay, it had given way long before; he had her fan in his hand, and taking his pencil from his pocket, he wrote a few words, expressive of the sentiments he *still* entertained for her; pride was gone now; and if she *would*——

He watched an opportunity to present it to her; but there was always something in the way, and he seated himself, for the heat began to be intense.

"Would you do me the favour of lending me that fan?" said lady Hunter; "my own, you see, I have broken."

"*I* will fan your ladyship," said Belfield.

"No, that for an elderly woman looks ridiculous—gave it me, pray."

Belfield gave it, and blessed his stars at the same moment, when he remembered she was terribly near-sighted.

"How does your ladyship like Merrick's eyeglasses?" said Miss Hauton.

Belfield grew very attentive.

"I can see admirably—the little figures on this fan, for instance, or this writing."

Belfield stretched out his hand; but her ladyship closed the fan without reading it, and he withdrew his hand.

"But your ladyship's sight was very indifferent, I thought; so indifferent, that——"

"Yes, half-a-year since it was as you

say, Miss Hauton, very indifferent, but," and the fan was again unfurled, "since the operation of couching I have recovered my sight sensibly. I could not read writing then, now I can distinguish even this perfectly."

"Is your ladyship cool yet?" asked Belfield, in mortal apprehension.

"Not quite; oh, Mr. Belfield, you wont forget your engagement to-morrow?"

"Oh, no, your ladyship; I will do myself the honour, certainly, with pleasure. Has your ladyship done with that fan?"

"Yes, thank you," and lady Hunter returned it to him.

Miss Hauton begged to look at it, it was so simple, so elegant; and Belfield was *obliged* to gratify her curiosity.

"This wreath of roses is really beautifully painted—may I inquire whose fan it is?"

"Miss Isabel Plumptree's."

"It looks like her; but here is some writing?"

"A charade, possibly," said lady Hunter; "I often see them in fans." Lady Hunter lifted up her glass.

"Isabel will want it; will you excuse my taking it to her *immediately*."

"I die to see the charade," said Miss Hauton, who had caught a glimpse of the first line or two—"Allow me, Mr. Belfield."

Miss Hauton held the ribband attached to the end of the fan, and Belfield the end of it.—"I must be rude, indeed, ma'am."

"So *must* I—I adore charades—I must see this."

"But another time—Miss Plumptree wants the fan."

"So does Miss Hauton."

"Indeed I must be resolute."

"And I determined, Mr. Belfield."

Lady Hunter laughed at the serious earnestness of Belfield, and the playfulness of Miss Hauton.

"The fan was entrusted to my care, Miss Hauton."

"Very likely; but you were allowed to read that charade, and you let lady Hunter have the fan, and why not me?"

"You see Miss Plumptree is so fatigued with dancing."

"But the charade—I must see it."

"If Miss Plumptree will permit."

"Oh, you are come to that!—go, I release you, Mr. Belfield."

He took the fan, and walked to Isabel; she was in deep conversation with Mr. Bentinck; intending to present it to her when an opportunity occurred. She was describing some scenery she had witnessed during her tour with her father and eldest sister to the Lakes, and spoke with all her heart and soul, animated and pleasing to a degree. Seldom had Belfield seen her in such high spirits, and he somehow attributed this light buoyancy of manner to the attentions he paid her that evening; under this impression he wished to ask her for the next dances. She was engaged, and he sat still.

It may appear irrelevant, but true it is,

that during the time thirty couple had gone down the *banging* dance of "*The Forest of Bondy*," Belfield had canvassed all Isabel's conduct, before, after, and since he had made her the *first* offer. That she *had* loved him, was certain—that she had done what was just and honourable, was equally so; her rejection of him spoke much nobleness and generosity, because she acted in opposition to her own feelings and her own heart. Might she not (though she treated him with apparent friendship), might she not feel indignant at the cold pride he had evinced towards her ever since she had told him her duty was dearer than her love? But still there were symptoms he could not mistake—whenever they had met, she had been the same gentle Isabel; his pride, his coldness, she had borne with silence and calmness; not one syllable had she ever breathed against him, but treated him the same as ever. She must have continued to love him, or she would never have done all this.

The dance ended, and the doors of the

supper-room were thrown open; Mr. Bentinck was Isabel's partner, of course he led her thither; so Belfield led lady Hunter, the fan still in his hand.

Lady Hunter, immediately after supper, requested her carriage to be ordered; and whilst Isabel was putting on her shawl in the vestibule, with some others of the party, Belfield gave her the fan and a pencil at the same moment—"Answer me quickly," he said, in a low tone; "write your reply below."

He did not look at her, for lady Hunter requested him to see whether it was her carriage, or the Hautons', then at the door.

"It is your carriage, but your ladyship will wait till——"

"Oh! I see—Miss Plumptree is answering your charade."

"Yes," and he was much agitated.—"Now shall I hand your ladyship to the door?"

"To the carriage, you mean, Mr. Belfield—if you please."

Belfield looked back as her ladyship put her arm through his, but Isabel's back was towards him; she however turned, and quickly followed, Mr. Bentinck handing her up the steps.—"Mr. Belfield, that fan is for you."

Not another word was spoken, and the carriage-door was shut.

Belfield lost no time in returning to the vestibule, which was nearly clear of company; he unfurled the fan, expecting, hoping, and fearing.

"Oh, that delectable fan!" said Miss Hauton; "let me have one peep?"

Belfield could ill bear this momentary interruption, and, with a repelling bow, he passed on; a convenient opportunity occurred, and he read:—

"I know not whether you are serious; if you really are, I shall be pained—if not, my reply will be of no moment, either to myself or you—*I am engaged.*

"ISABEL."

CHAPTER III.

WAS it to Mr. Elliott? was Belfield's first thought, after he had recovered from the shock of Isabel's note, or rather had recovered himself so far as to be able to think —was it to Mr. Elliott she was engaged? He knew of no one else who paid her *decided* attention; he would know whether it really was or not before he slept—he had a strong interest to know who was to be the happy—yes, certainly, whoever won, that is married, Isabel Plumptree, would be a *very* happy man. *He* might have had her, but his pride, his interminable pride, had lost all that was dear to him on earth—one who knew his disposition and his heart; and if woman could have made him happy, she would; he had trifled, and trifled, till she was gone. In adversity she had been so resigned—in prospe-

rity so all that was good and virtuous; she had borne every deprivation without a murmur—friends (at least those who termed themselves so) had neglected her, and *he* among the rest—yet she had forgiven all this, and always treated him *well*, always the same. He did believe she loved him still, and he was not aware, till the moment he was certain she was out of his reach, *how* much he loved her. She was certainly agitated when she gave him the fan—very *much* agitated. He was certain she could not love Elliott so well as himself—the plain, sincere Mr. Elliott. But if she was engaged to him, so it must be; but he would think there must be something of ambition.

"Pride has done this—false pride," said Belfield to himself; "I have lost her. If at this moment she saw into my heart, she would pity—no, she would despise me; but Elliott—is it possible Elliott can be the *happy* man? Oh, yes! he will be a very, very happy man."

He rode round his park, and met the

very man who of all others he most wished not to see, and the very person of whom he had been thinking. They talked on farming, on plans, on hunting, on horses; at last Belfield ventured to wish Mr. Elliott happy.

"Thank you," said Elliott.

"The woman you have chosen——"

Elliott smiled, and seemed to anticipate the conclusion of Belfield's speech.

"Will make you so, doubtless."

"I hope so, and think so."

A shade of regret passed over Belfield's countenance.—"Your house is finished—you will *soon* marry, I suppose?"

"Not very soon—no," and Mr. Elliott would have waved the subject; but Belfield followed it up close, so close, that Mr. Elliott said—"To be candid, I had some difficulty in getting all parties to consent, for she has no fortune, you know, and my father——"

"Ah! wished for some, doubtless."

Elliott assented, and at the same time

turned his horse to the park-gate, with—"I shall call on her this morning."

"I suppose so, it is but a little way—good-morning!"

Mr. Elliott's marriage was now a nine days wonder.—"That young thing, why she is scarcely seventeen," many said; and Misses who were dying to be married at fifteen, thought she was *quite* old enough. Others *verging* declared she was *much* too young, and too giddy.

Belfield soon learned Isabel Plumptree was *not* engaged to Mr. Elliott; it was Barbara Heaffort who had won the plain, the sensible man. He felt glad, for a moment after he had heard this intelligence, and then he was mad to know who it was; such things are never secrets long—certain attentions, certain wedding preparations, were spoken off, and Mr. Bentinck was known to be the accepted lover of Isabel.

Yes—in Isabel he saw the woman who would make him happy; there was no *effect* in her character—she was all nature

and cheerfulness; he made the offer, and was accepted.

"And so," said the loquacious Miss G——, "that Miss Plumptree is really going to be married?"

"Yes, and well married too," said Mrs. Devereux, to whom she spoke.

"Well, I thought she was dreadfully altered."

"Did you?" said Mrs. Devereux, coldly.

"Yes; every body knew she was in love with Mr. Belfield, but it was not the least likely he ever made her an offer," continued Miss G——.

"So far from not being likely to make her an offer, he has done it twice—since their misfortunes too."

"Do *you* believe it, ma'am?" replied Miss G——, colouring.

"Yes, I do, and I know it."

"Well, I *am* surprised.

"Indeed I am not; I always thought Isabel a sweet girl, and Bell was *particularly* fond of her—very *much* attached to her, in fact."

"Indeed! I thought Miss Devereux said——"

"Bell *always* liked her, whatever she *said*," interrupted Mrs. Devereux; "indeed they have been thought similar in their manners."

"Oh! I cannot see the *least* similarity; Miss Devereux is so fashionable, so easy."

"And yet Miss Plumptree may be like her."

There was a pause, during which time Miss G—— recovered herself.—"Well, ma'am, after that *affair* of Julia Heaffort's, only think of Mr. Elliott's marrying the sister!"

"What affair, Miss G——?" inquired Mrs. Devereux, though she knew the whole transaction much better than her informant.

"Why, what—have not you heard of Mr. Cervantes?"

"Not a syllable."

"Why, report says, and I believe it, that she made Mr. Cervantes an offer."

"A music-master, I think?" said Mrs. Devereux, carelessly.

"Yes, nothing more—his father was a something low, very low, and his——"

"But the affair," interrupted Mrs. Devereux.

"Why, yes, I was going to say, ma'am, Mr. Cervantes had some debts, and Juliana sold her diamonds to pay them. One morning, when he went, she gave him the money in a letter; he refused it, and rejected *her*."

"How distressing!" said Mrs. Devereux, for at that moment she thought of Bell and Erasmus Buckfield.

"Well, ma'am, Juliana, *you* know, is very headstrong, and made so much sorrow of it, and, in fact, ma'am, was so ridiculous, that every body knows it, and Mr. Cervantes is forbidden the house: then Mrs. Heaffort upbraided him with having stolen the affections of her *dear* daughter, for you know Juliana was always her mother's favourite; so he declared he never attempted any such thing;

at last all the truth came out, and Juliana is wearing the willow. But who *would* have thought of Barbara marrying so well? Mrs. Elliott! why she is just seventeen—what a child to marry! But I cannot help thinking of the Plumptrees—Isabel—well, I *do* say she is dreadfully altered."

"I always admired her," and Mrs. Devereux raised her voice to an audible tone, so that Belfield, who entered the room, heard her distinctly—"and Bell and she were always attached—strongly, I may say; I am happy she is likely to marry so well to Mr. Bentinck."

The common compliments of the day passed, and Bell soon afterwards came in. Now we have no wish to weary the reader with the repetition of their conversation. Bell meant to attract, and to captivate, *if possible;* and, as she knew her man, she endeavoured, by every means in her power, to please. She confessed she always admired and esteemed Miss Isabel Plumptree—she had called several times since their misfortunes—they were a worthy

amiable family; and the more she knew of them, the more she admired them.

Belfield was not to be taken by storm; and after having heard such songs as Bell knew Isabel sung, "given in style," he left her without one thought of her beauty, her elegance, or her attractions, or any thing concerning her.

David's scheme of retrenchment lasted three months: his spirits revived; he had seen Mrs. Longdale, and he began to think she would not have made him *very* happy, for she ruled Longdale with absolute sway. He also began to find himself dull: he had no resources within himself; in an unlucky moment Harrington Lodge came to the hammer, and the ensuing winter beheld him with his four hunters—his new chariot—a member of the four-in-hand club—a subscriber to B——ks'—and his sister a dashing *bel esprit*—his mother what she had always been, a manœuvrer—and he as dissipated and as lost a man as ever.

Caroline Belfield had the mortification of meeting Mr. Bentinck as the lover of Isabel Plumptree. To avoid their marriage, she accepted an invitation to the Devereuxs; it would have been absolutely horrid—dreadful—to have witnessed it; so, strongly against the wishes of her brother, she left Dacresfield Hall, and went to town, fully certain, and heartily wishing to never visit Dacresfield again, at least as *Miss Belfield.*

We had forgotten one circumstance which transpired a month before Miss Belfield's departure. She was one of those who acted from the impulse of the moment; the impulse, whether good or bad, was obeyed, and sometimes the consequences were *disagreeable.*

"What do you think I have done, Charles?" she said one morning to her brother.

"It is impossible for me to think what you have done, Caroline."

"Why, invited Miss Higgins here for a week; she was so very *civil* about a drawing.

She really draws very well, and she is to teach me inlaying."

"Well; but did you forget, then, the Miss Bellairs were coming?"

"Yes, at the moment. I can write; yes, I *can* write, and deny her."

"You had better not," said Belfield, coolly, "now you *have* asked her."

"Oh, but the Bellairs——no, Miss Higgins will never do——Yes, I will write."

Belfield, who was one of the proudest men in the world, said no more, and Caroline determined to make an excuse for delaying Anna's visit. With her feet on her ottoman, and her pen in her hand, she sat devising what to say as plausible, and so on, when—"A note from sir Henry Bellair's, ma'am," and the footman brought one in. An excuse; the Bellairs were unexpectedly going to Bath.

Caroline read the billet twice over before she credited her senses; it was so stiff, so cold. Agnes Bellair to write thus was cruel—it was more, it was unkind. The

note spoke of "sorrow at their disappointment, in being obliged to decline the *honour* of visiting Miss Belfield; but Miss Belfield was aware that lady Craven always was peremptory in her commands; and to Bath they must go, in obedience to them."

Caroline scanned her conduct; there was one little *affair* about a caricature, in which the two Bellairs were designated, she reflected on with no peculiar pleasure; but still Miss G—— could not have been so base as to shew it them; and she was the only person Miss Belfield had ever allowed to look at it, or to have a copy.

Animated with the resolution of divining whether Miss G—— had been faulty, she walked to Mr. G——'s house, and sought her friend.

Both ladies expressed the most *unfeigned* pleasure in meeting; and Miss G—— was certain she could not express what she felt at her dear Miss Belfield's venturing all the way from Dacresfield, through the park too, and the roads so wet, to see *her;* she must stay the day with her, now

she was come, and a servant should be sent to say where she was.

Miss Belfield refused, but followed Miss G—— to her dressing-room, to see a new-worked dress, of Swiss muslin, absolutely done by Miss G—— herself.

"How very elegant, very beautiful!" said Miss Belfield, on beholding it.

"Oh, the leaves are so easily done, with floss cotton and lace, I will shew you; and so quick too; and every body has admired it, even the Miss Bellairs."

"Ah, the Bellairs!" said Caroline; "do you know they have written such a stiff, cold note to me, to refuse coming next week, positively I am quite uncomfortable."

Miss G—— bore Caroline's penetrating look uncommonly well; not the least guilty blush stole over her cheek—no emotion; she kept her finger steadily on the pattern of the leaf, and was going on describing how it was to be done.

"I was afraid," said Caroline, "the ca-

ricature, you know, that they might have heard, or by chance seen it."

"You gave no one else a copy besides myself? You know you can depend on *me*," said Miss G——; "therefore, of course——"

"Oh, I did not imagine, after what you said, you would *shew* it; I only thought, by chance, mere chance (for they are so curious), they might see it," interrupted Caroline.

"Oh, no! I assure you, upon my word and honour, no one has seen it *but* myself."

And Caroline was satisfied.

CHAPTER IV.

"What! is our friendship come to this?"

CAROLINE next day determined to call on the Bellairs, to divine, if possible, the why and wherefore about their coolness; so she stepped into the carriage, and drove off to Overton; and though she actually *saw* Agnes at the dining-room window, she received the intelligence of *not at home*.

Caroline, who was of a dauntless spirit, was certain there was some mistake, she said, and she would see Miss Bellair at any rate, for she just caught a glimpse of her not a moment ago—and she was admitted.

Miss Bellair, who was a quiz and a mimic, with a vast deal of form, received Caroline in the drawing-room, with a good deal of pride.

Caroline was *certain* about the caricature, or she could not, nor would not, have borne the humiliation of receiving a *not at home*, and then requesting to be admitted; but she told Miss Bellair she called on purpose for an explanation of her cool note, and more particularly as she understood she was not going to Bath at all; consequently she felt very much hurt, and she must have all explained.

Miss Bellair *could* give *no* explanation, she said, very haughtily.

Miss Belfield said, that if any thing in her manners had occurred which had been erroneous, she was very willing to repair and acknowledge it.

Miss Bellair replied, Miss Belfield's manners had never been any thing but what they ought.

Caroline again thought of the caricature —"Then I am at a loss to conjecture your refusal of my invitation," said she.

Lady Craven had asked, and then put off their visit, on account of illness, was the reply.

"I am the last in the world to press any thing disagreeable," and Caroline blushed with passion; then in a repressed tone she added, "you say *I* have not offended you, Miss Bellair; therefore I consider myself acquitted, with respect to *my* conduct towards *you*. I am too proud to ask for an explanation, after what has passed. Good-morning."

Miss Bellair curtseyed slightly, and Caroline, with as stiff a reverence, left the room. She called on Miss G—— on her way home, in dire mortification. "Did you, or did you not, shew the caricature to the Bellairs?" she asked fractiously.

"Upon my honour, *no!*" said Miss G——, firmly and angrily.

And Caroline entered on a disquisition of her disagreeable call, the merits and *demerits* of her visiting with the Bellairs—teazed herself with endeavouring to account for their coolness, laughed at them, then praised them, and lastly set off home, convinced they had not seen the caricature.

The Bellairs, who prided themselves on being all nature—girls of *ton*, and so on, felt themselves licensed to shew off at Overton. Their mother, who had had health, was always confined to her room; and the governess was a French one, who had just address enough to please her pupils and their mamma too; so between one and another they did as they pleased.

Miss Bellair had a fine shape, and *displayed* it. Miss Emma had wit (or fancied she had, which is much the same in one's own conceit), and was always talking. She had fine teeth too, and was always laughing to shew them. So much for *their* characters.

It is true, our heroine, Anna, felt diffident of appearing among the gay set at Dacresfield. Belfield too had his terrors; his manners were so repelling, and his carriage so high; and then his sister, so fashionable, so easy; but go she must, for Mrs. Harcourt wished it. She found she *must* get off that ridiculous bashfulness—that troublesome timidity; and with a hun-

dred ideas passing in her mind, she set off for Dacresfield, hoping the Bellairs would not be there, yet fearing that they would.

The carriage drew up to the door; the step was let down—Mr. Belfield himself assisted her into the hall, and there she was met by Miss Belfield, who did the honours, with her accustomed grace and ease.

Anna felt reassured a little.

"You will like to go to your own room We have a small dinner-party, Miss Higgins, to-day. My maid shall attend you. All well at Alby, I hope?"

"Quite well, thank you, Miss Belfield."

"Now, Willis, shew Miss Higgins her room. You will excuse me," said Caroline; "I must go to my visitors."

Now this reception was more than satisfying, it was gratifying; and Anna began to think she should divest herself of her awe, in some measure at least; so she followed Willis to the room appropriated for her use, contrasting the ease of Miss Belfield with the assumed airs of Mrs. Wil-

liam Barker, who made such a parade and form of receiving her when she had last visited her. Willis was dressing her hair when intelligence arrived dinner waited; frightened to death, she hastened down as soon as possible. Miss Belfield met her at the drawing-room door, introduced her all round, talked to her, and by every means in her power endeavoured to make her comfortable; and Anna thought to herself—"How happy I shall be here, almost as much so as if I was at Alby!"

After dinner the ladies retired to Miss Belfield's boudoir, where there was a fine-toned piano and harp.

Miss Belfield set the example of playing, and then requested the honourable Miss Sinclair, and then Anna; and our heroine felt her time pass away delightfully, and could scarcely believe it was seven o'clock when tea was ready, and the gentlemen joined them.

Then after tea some played cards, some chess, and a few of the ladies went to the piano, followed by a few beaux. Miss

Belfield was flirting—no, not flirting, *attracting* a Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes was a peevish, thin-looking young man, nephew to general Dewhurst, whose fortune he was to inherit—a young man who *talked a* great deal of principle, honour, feeling, and integrity; so Miss Belfield, of course, was all for sentiment—all for attraction; to please was her ambition; to please and be pleased, therefore, she was alike condescending to Anna, as to the honourable Miss Sinclair, or to other *honourables* who were there.—"Miss Higgins will play, and sing too, delightfully," said Miss Belfield, as she opened the piano.

"Oh, no, Miss Belfield! you must excuse me; really I am no singer," said Anna.

"I think I heard you two hours since," said Caroline, laughing.

Anna, unaccustomed to teaze, as some *bel esprits* do at the harp or piano, by refusing what all along they intend to do, sat down, and acquitted herself intolerably bad. She was frightened, and afraid of

exhibiting before so many judges; and Belfield kept his eyes fixed on her all the time she sung. In truth, our heroine never looked better; her hair was light and glossy, and Willis certainly had done it justice, with braiding, and bowing, and placing the flowers; her complexion received no detriment from the blaze of wax lights; and her eyes were not handsome, but very expressive—her form not good, but rather lovely than not; altogether, summed up in a few words, she was one of those calculated not to dazzle at first sight, but to improve *considerably* on acquaintance.

Ah, now, if a sentimental reader be skimming these pages, with what anger will he throw down the book!—"A heroine, and not beautiful!" he will say; "how heterogeneous! Why did not her flaxen curls descend on a bosom of snow, or fall in rich clusters to her beautiful waist? why were not her eyes of a 'mild ethereal blue?' why had she not coral lips, and a bust like Venus? why was not

her voice melodious as an angel's? and why does she not 'bound over the hills of ——, like an antelope?"

In truth, we stand convicted, and only say in our defence—"Nature will be nature!" and to Nature and her rules and laws we mean to submit.

Or perhaps a Gothic reader may take up these volumes.—"What," he cries, "not one abbey—not one mouldering ruin in these pages? No 'flitting shades'—no 'murmuring groans'—no damsels arrayed in pall—no murders to unravel? Devil take such insipidity! Give *me* a book where there is some tale—some mystery, for instance."—But we must go on with *our* tale.

Mr. Forbes left Dacresfield the next day, quite free from all heartache, to go to his uncle's, and Caroline and Anna were left alone, save the presence of Belfield.

"Have you ever had an attachment?" asked Caroline, as she was lolling on the sofa in the drawing-room, after her bro-

ther had left them together. "Confess now."

"I—no, Miss Belfield."

"Why, you blush, I declare; scarlet too. Well, is he as handsome as Bentinck," and she *could* not help a sigh.

"Upon my word, Miss Belfield—indeed I——"

"Bentinck behaved very ill to me," continued Caroline; "very ill."

Anna was silent; she had heard the reverse.

"He is going to be married, you know, to Isabel Plumptree."

Anna replied in the affirmative, and there was a long silence.

"You will be terribly dull here, Miss Higgins. You have staid at the Plumptrees, I think; I have understood from some one, I cannot say who, that they are such an *amusing* family—never at a loss; how delightful! but is it true?"

"Perfectly, Miss Belfield."

"How *did* you pass your days?—tell me."

"After breakfast we worked."

"Oh, horrible!"

"Some one read out, which was very pleasant."

"But not novels?"

"Oh, yes; some of Miss Edgeworth's, or Mrs. West's; and poems or plays—Shakespeare, or——"

"Well, what did you do then?"

"Why, we walked.

"Walked! If it was dirty?"

"Then we staid at home, and drew, or went on reading, till dinner; for they have no carriage, so we could not ride."

"And after dinner you worked again, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Amusing. And this is how your time was passed; why, I should have died."

"Generally; and Mrs. Plumptree is a very clever——"

"Oh, I dare say; but your talking of work puts me in mind of a pattern Miss G—— lent me; I will shew it you, and the stitch too."

The velvet ridicule was opened, and Caroline displayed the pattern, and was shewing Anna how it was done, when Miss G—— was announced. She introduced the two immediately.

"Oh, I have been expiring to see you, my dear Miss Belfield," said Miss G——.

"And I should have died, had you not come; at least Miss Higgins would."

"What do you think has happened?" said Miss G——, in a quick tone.

"Impossible for me to say."

"Why, I have been calling on the Bellairs (Caroline's brow fell), and Agnes Bellair *would* walk with me down the park, for we conversed a *great deal* together; so I sent the carriage down through the great gateway, and, as I said before, we walked across the park, to meet it by the Old Lodge. Well, who should drive up but the Campbells? You know Eloisa, a little, light-haired, affected thing, as Agnes says."

"*I* don't think her affected," said Ca-

roline, glad at an opportunity of dissenting at any rate.

"Oh dear, Miss Belfield, not affected! Her voice, her daneing, her manners—and she had on an Obi hat, which——"

"Became her," rejoined Caroline.

"Oh, no! she looked terribly in it. Pink certainly is not *her* colour."

"Indeed *I* think it is."

"Well, the Bellairs and I——"

"But this adventure," said Caroline, interrupting Miss G——, and not caring to hear so much of the Bellairs, which, all things considered, became rather a sore subject.

"Well, Harry Campbell, and Milfare, his *chum*, were in the barouche, and they came immediately after us, for Agnes Bellair is certainly a very fine girl—very attractive. Well, they followed us—'Good Heavens!' said I, 'let us make off,' for you know *I* did not wish to be seen; but Agnes sprained her ancle, so we were *obliged* to stop."

Miss Belfield smiled *very* contemptu-

ously; but Miss G—— was too much occupied in looking at her own white hands to heed either the smile or the look; and Caroline took advantage of the momentary pause Miss G—— made, to ask Anna whether *she* knew the Bellairs, or liked them?

"I have seen but little of them," said Anna, in reply.

"But do you like what you have seen?" interrogated Caroline.

"Not much; that is, I really scarcely could form an opinion, Miss Belfield."

Caroline's countenance brightened, and she requested Miss G—— to go on.

"We were obliged to stop, which was distressing," resumed Miss G——.

"Oh, very," and Caroline spoke with satiric emphasis; "so *distressing*, the beaux overtook you."

"Yes; and for the first time in my life I saw Clarence Plumptree; oh, a horrid stick! he's a barrister, you know."

Anna coloured at the manner in which Miss G—— spoke of that amiable young man, *deeply*. Miss Belfield marked the

strange suspicious blush, but said nothing. It *might* be mere indignation, and so forth.

"Agnes walked with young Campbell, and I talked to Milfare, Clarence Plumptree escorting Miss Campbell, talking of lord Byron, and his 'dark blue seas,' and his 'Childe Harold;' and poetry, and 'Tales of my Landlord.' But you know the bridge; well, as we were walking over it, young Campbell persuaded Agnes to walk on the railing, and she fell in!"

Caroline burst into a laugh.—"Well, who was her hero? Who saved her?"

"Why, young Campbell was no swimmer, he said; and Milfare never dared venture into cold water since he broke a blood-vessel; so Clarence Plumptree——"

"The stick!"

"Why did I say stick? Well, he brought her to the shore, almost insensible, and there was *such* confusion; and poor lady Bellair heard something about drowning and Agnes, and Heaven only knows what; and she came down stairs

into the hall just as they were carrying Agnes in, and then she fainted; and Eloisa Campbell ran about screaming, and upbraiding her brother, and the house was in complete confusion. But your floss cotton—the winder!" exclaimed Miss G——, with a changing countenance.

Both ladies sprung forward, Caroline merely for fun, Miss G—— from fright. —"I beg—I request, you will give the winder. You know I lent—that is, gave ——"

"You gave me both cotton and winder," and Caroline grasped it firmly in her hand.

"As a *great* favour, I entreat—I beg," said Miss G——, strenuously.

"Is it a love-letter?"

"No."

Caroline marked the changing features of Miss G——; she adored tormenting, and still firmly kept the winder in her hand, which was composed of a fine gilt-edged note, wound up.

"Pray, pray give it me."

"Not till I have read and discovered all," said Caroline, laughing.

But Miss G—— was much too embarrassed to laugh—too much agitated to smile.—"It is a milliner's bill, upon my honour."

"Pshaw! now that is idle, Miss G——."

"On my knees I implore——"

"Knees! ridiculous! about a paltry piece of paper, which you were so careless as to make a cotton-winder of! No, no."

"Pray, Miss Belfield," said Anna, affected by Miss G——'s emotion, "do give the paper."

"I! no, indeed; I will open it now," said Caroline, opening it.

Miss G——, half playfully, at least what was meant to be half playfully, made another attempt to gain the note, but was unsuccessful.—"If you love me, Miss Belfield." This appeal failed.

"Love you! Bentinck knows I never loved any body but myself, and my own

gratifications. There, that's sterling truth; so now open, Sesame!"

"For God's sake!" and Miss G—— trembled violently.

"Oh, pray, Miss Belfield, have mercy!" interposed Anna, feeling for Miss G——.

"Mercy! Here's a fuss about a little piece of paper. No, now I know my power, and will exert it. Into my pocket, thou disturber of the private peace of Emma G——, till I can read you comfortably."

Miss G—— saw no hope; she made her call as short as possible, could talk no more after this occurrence, and took her leave, evidently discomposed.

"And now for this moreeau," said Caroline, as Miss G——'s carriage drove away. "I am dying with curiosity to see it."

Anna dared not venture to oppose, and the note was opened. Few were the words it contained; but they will divine the reason of Miss G——'s *uncommon* agitation.

"DEAR MISS G——,

"A million thanks for the caricature of Miss Belfield's doing—we know how to resent it: *you shall never be implicated though.*

"Your sincere friends,

"AGNES BELLAIR, and

"*Haste.*" "EMMA BELLAIR."

CHAPTER V.

AFTER Miss Belfield's indignation had a little subsided—after she had gone through all the favours Miss G—— had received at her hands, she recovered herself so far as to shew Anna Dacresfield House; then she retired to her toilet to adorn.

Anna chanced to be dressed first, and, *par hazard*, she went into the drawing-room, where stood Miss Belfield's piano.

It was a remarkable fine tone; and our heroine finding some songs of Miss Belfield's laying on it, she took one up to try. She was in no fear of amateur or scientific Misses, and altogether her voice never sounded better certainly.

Mr. Belfield, who was in the library adjoining the drawing-room, came out just in time to hear the concluding stanzas, and to see Anna looking remarkably well. He indulged himself in two or three glances, and really thought her interesting; she was something like Isabel, he imagined—she had that same gentle retiring manner; and yet Anna was animated when known—so was Isabel; but Isabel's family was good; now our heroine, on the mother's side, was certainly so too; but her father—in trade, and of very mean extraction—no, no, Belfield could *not* forget that. Anna had fifty thousand pounds, but money—*he* did not want money. But this song—we had almost forgotten it.

"There came a spirit o'er my life—
A spirit of a treach'rous cast,
Long, long it warr'd with inward strife,
And then in suddenness is past.

"It came in friendship's gentle guise—
It linger'd with me year from year;
I lov'd it for its halcyon ties,
And time but made it doubly dear.

"Yes, I and it together grew,
A fancied dream of bliss we drew—
A vision sweet, but soon it past,
And I the spirit lost at last."

"They are pretty," said Belfield; "a manuscript song, I see; the hand is Miss Plumptree's."

"She wrote the lines — Miss Isabel Plumptree, I mean, sir."

"Indeed?" and Belfield snatched them up; "why, they are beautiful, really beautiful;" and then checking himself, he said —"Oblige me by singing it again, ma'am."

Anna complied immediately. Belfield admired her voice, and the style of her singing strongly reminded him of Isabel's. He actually sat down, and listened till

dinner was on the table, and then gave his arm to Anna, as she went into the dining-room. They had no company with them; and in the evening Miss Belfield condescended to listen whilst her brother read a new work to them.

Anna listened with deep attention—she never had heard any one read so well; his voice was peculiarly adapted to poetry, and she enjoyed it much, so much so, that Belfield half smiled, and yet was gratified to observe how deeply she attended to him.

Anna passed a week at Dacresfield very happily; then she took her leave of Mr. and Miss Belfield to go to Mr. William Barker's, leaving her host very much pleased, and certainly wishing to see more of her—not that he was in love—no, but, he was very much interested in her, and interest leads to love *sometimes*; but then here was pride, all conquering pride.

Now for a scene at Hedingham Cottage, the residence of the pretty capricious Mrs. William Barker, who imagined that to

command was happiness: she loved to command, with absolute sway, every thing and every body, even her husband. Now fools (we are rather severe, we own) are not so easily governed, and Mrs. Barker found her spouse a little obstinate or so; she found, or rather thought she found, he was fond of money—Olivia admired to spend it with *éclat*—to cut a dash—to be the finest of the fine; Barker loved to be rich, and thought monied——there was so much *importance* in being rich.

Now Mrs. Barker had a great wish to go to a grand assembly at Alby, in a Valenciennes dress, which was to be had, no matter where, but at the trifling expence of seventy guineas. She watched her opportunity, and when she saw Barker in a *prime* humour, started the subject.

Barker was inexorable—tears were useless, and prayers equally so.—"Seventy guineas! why you are mad, Olivia."

"Well, but the dress would last for ever."

"No—seventy guineas! why it would

purchase that very piece of plantation he was thinking of, to the east of the cottage."

Anna, who chanced to be dressing during the time this *fracas* took place, saw her door burst open, and Mrs. Barker enter, her eyes swelled in her head. We have heard much of "beauty in tears," but we confess we never saw much elegance in a red nose and red eyes. Mrs. Barker, as well as her passion would allow, related the grievance, with every possible exaggeration—how Barker foamed, swore, and behaved—how *she* entreated, and had been refused.

Anna remembered she had a lace dress, very much resembling Valenciennes, and she said it was very much at Mrs. Barker's service.

"Oh! Miss Higgins, I am very much obliged, but *this* Valenciennes is so elegant, the pattern so uncommon," and with perfect correctness she minuted the make, fineness, and beauty of the dress; and concluded by saying she was *determined* to

have it; but just at *that* time she could not command the sum of seventy guineas, for those two grottoes Barker was so mad about she had just paid for.

Anna made no mention of lending the sum, and Mrs. Barker went on—"You know, my *dear* Miss Higgins, it is so horrid to go in the same dress over and over again; to be sure I hate borrowing—it seems to let one down so; not that it *really* does; but I must have a high opinion of those who I venture to ask, because, you know, it puts one into their power—I mean borrowing *money*, for you do not seem clearly to understand me."

"But my dress, my lace dress, is at your service, ma'am."

"Oh! ah! I know you are very kind, but I have set my mind, my heart, upon this Valenciennes one: and you know this is not like the general Alby balls—it is to be a grand affair, and I should like to go superb, yes, quite superb, for every one knows Barker is a rich man; and I *ought* to go *very* handsomely dressed—in fact,

it is a duty I owe to my situation in life."

Anna did not exactly comprehend how Mrs. Barker should owe a duty to her "situation in life," when she sacrificed the duty she owed her husband; but human nature is full of inconsistency.

"I wish—oh! how I *wish* I could purchase it! and how I wish too you could see it! I think I will try Barker once more, and then if he wont, why I will borrow the money, that's all."

The married couple and Anna dined in silence, broken only by common questions of courtesy. The dessert passed away the same, and Barker left the room.

Mrs. Barker was an insipid little creature; she could talk of nothing but hats, pelisses, and ball-dresses; and Anna was entertained till tea by a description of the dress she was first introduced in—what people said—who she danced with—how she danced; and then she discoursed on the misfortune of being married, and not being able to do as she pleased—"Barker was not recovered at dinner, so I would

not say a word then, but I shall see how he is at tea," she said.

Well, tea came; as Mrs. Barker said, her husband was a little more in humour, and throwing himself good-temperedly on a chair, he asked whether a ride would be agreeable after tea was over?

Mrs. Barker had a headache, and Anna felt herself obliged to offer to stay to amuse her. So Barker stirred his coffee angrily round, relapsed into silence, and then left the room, slapping the door violently after him.

"There now, he is gone—what say you to a ride?" said Mrs. Barker.

"A ride!" said Anna.

"Yes, I want to shew you this dress; a ride too will do my headache good."

"But what will Mr. Barker *think*, ma'am?"

"Think, oh! *I* do not mind what he *thinks*."

"Perhaps now you mean to go, you will ask him to go with you?"

"No, indeed; just be so kind as to ring the bell—we will have the horses put to directly."

Anna got up reluctantly, rang the bell, and Mrs. Barker gave her orders.

"I wish you would have my dress, ma'am," said Anna, making no effort to put on her bonnet; "because I think Mr. Barker will be so hurt after we refused to go with him, to know that we——"

"Fastidious!—I do not care if he is hurt—I am *determined* to go."

"If ever I marry," said Anna, as she went up stairs for her bonnet; "I hope I may never forget myself so far as to——"

"Who ordered the carriage?" said the angry voice of Mr. Barker.

"Sir—I—that is—Mrs. Barker wished," answered Anna, starting.

"I do not care what she wished, she shall not have it. If you like to ride, it shall be at your service though," and so he left her in a violent passion.

"Come, Miss Higgins, are you ready?" said Mrs. Barker, at the dressing-room door.

"No, ma'am—Mr. Barker says we cannot have the carriage."

"Oh! but we will," and down she went. Mrs. Barker entered her husband's small study, with—"Really, Barker, I am very much astonished at you! really you make me very uncomfortable, and you know Miss Higgins is so timid; besides, you put it in her power to tell all the world we do not live *exactly* comfortable."

"I do not care what you say, nor what she says, nor what the world says—it *may* know all, though I must say Miss Higgins is a very nice girl."

"Well, and she wished for a ride."

"*She!* I thought *you*."

"*She* wished for a ride, and so, as I thought she was dull, and only refused going on my account, I ordered the carriage."

Barker thought he had been hasty, but still disdaining the idea of being the first to conciliate, he made no immediate reply, but kept flapping a book he had in his hand backwards and forwards on the table.

"Now about this dress—this Valenciennes dress, Barker—I *have* given up all idea of it, yet I must confess I——"

"I wont here a word about it, ma'am. Take the carriage, as Miss Higgins wishes it, and go where you please—to me it is immaterial."

"Obstinate! well, will you go with us?"

"No."

"We meant to go round by your new purchase—I told Miss Higgins we would ride that way to-night."

Barker suffered his lady to repeat this last sentence again, and then throwing the book down, he said ungraciously—"Well, I do not care if I *do* go."

So off they went. Barker forgot his anger in shewing Anna his new farm—dragged them both over a large ploughed field, to shew them a prospect—grew into a perfect good-humour, and then returned home. Thus passed the first day of Anna's visit at Hedingham Cottage.

CHAPTER VI.

Oh! how *charming* 'tis to teaze,
And to do as we please,
To plague and torment! CASTILLY.

MANŒUVRES were vain—the Valenciennes dress was yet unbought, and consequently Mrs. Barker half miserable. The ball drew nearer and nearer, and there were no hopes but borrowing—borrowing; and who likes to borrow? the very word itself is degrading.

"The fact is, I do not know who to apply to," said Mrs. Barker; "there is Mrs. G——, one might as well tell—I do not know who; and Mrs. Larolles would in a moment, but I rather think she will betray me, and that would be so horrid, you know. Then there's Miss Fortescue would lend it me, and never say a word, but her pocket is always low."

Anna made no offer, because she did not altogether approve this rebellion against Mr. Barker; she tried reasoning—to be sure it was *mild* reasoning: but then she was delicately circumstanced, and did not wish to offend Mrs. Barker; and then her sense of honour was very high, and she could not bear that when Mrs. Barker appeared in the Valenciennes dress, she should represent to her husband that it was *lent* her by Miss Higgins. She loved candour and frankness, and she regretted she must disoblige one or the other.

"Well, but the dress I must have, and will have."

"I wish you would only look at mine," said Anna, spreading it out.

"Oh! my dear, that is no more to be compared (begging your pardon though) to the one I want, than cotton lace is to Brussels. No, I am determined, and for this time Barker shall not have his way."

With these words she left her, and in the evening arrived the long-talked-of dress, most angelically trimmed to be sure,

and Mrs. Barker imagined, with her pearls and some weeping feathers, she should cut no despicable figure in the Alby ball-room.

A grand consultation was held in her dressing-room, on the important subject, in which Anna's opinion was required. The dress was displayed (far superior to our heroine's, we admit), then criticised, then admired, then festooned, then fastened up with flowers, then fitted on; and Mrs. Barker, quite pleased with her seventy-guinea purchase, returned to the drawing-room in high good humour.

"Only two days to the ball now," she said, rather gaily to her husband.

"No, only two days now," said Barker; "I am glad you had not that fine dress—that seventy-guinea one you wanted to buy, I mean."

Mrs. Barker coloured, and then gave a side-glance at Anna, and a smile.

"Well, but I have got a lace one now, Barker."

"Ah! and that wont be any use," said he, drily.

"No use! why?"

"Why, there is no ball—it is all put off."

"Put off! that jest wont do," said Mrs. Barker, laughing.

"'Pon my soul! lord Melford is dead—one of the stewards, and lady Melford, who planned the ball, of course cannot go, and so it is all given up."

"Seriously?" and Mrs. Barker wished the Valenciennes dress at Jericho.

"Yes, 'pon my honour."

"Well, it is horridly provoking though," she said, trying to be composed.

"There now, are not you glad you had not that expensive lace dress? seventy guineas, my dear—such a sum! why you would have it all for nothing. Why are not you glad now? it would have been so mortifying. Why, you must feel quite glad, my love?"

"Oh! yes, glad—I am glad, Barker; do not teaze so about that dress."

"Well, my love, I was only saying how glad you *must* be—I am sure I should

if I had been so near buying a seventy-guinea dress; because seventy guineas,—why only think of seventy guineas, my love! why it is quite a little fortune; and then, as I said before, to be of no use; so you see I was right; only, Miss Higgins, Livy, like all women, wants always to have her way; we do judge right sometimes. I cannot help thinking what an escape she has had though, 'pon my soul!"

Anna felt strangely inclined to laugh, but the mortified countenance of Mrs. Barker prevented her, and after a few moments she left the room.

"There now you see, Miss Anna, if Olivia would still have persisted in having that dress, why it would have been quite a misfortune. If she would but be guided more by me, we should be much *more* comfortable, only women will be women. But this dress—'pon my soul! nothing but this dress runs in my head—Livy must acknowledge *I* was right."

Mrs. Barker drew out the dress, which

she had gazed at but a few minutes before with very pleasing sensations, in a *very* different frame of mind. She began to despise it—she looked at it till she imagined it half frightful—the sight of it absolutely disgusted her; and she threw herself on a chair, undergoing a variety of emotions.

Anna entered the dressing-room, and from her very heart began to pity her.—"One resource is yet left," she said, after a pause; "you can return it."

"Return it! why do not your remember I *would* have it cut to a stomacher before? Return it! no, they wont take it now."

"Some little compensation, perhaps."

"No, no—pray do not talk to me—I am mad, mortified, and provoked; and then I *borrowed* the money."

"Oh! you *did borrow*, ma'am?" said Anna.

"Yes, what was I to do? I wanted the dress; really I had not one fit to go in—mine was so old, so wretchedly, miserably

told. Good God, now, and the ball to be put off! it is unbearable."

"But still I think," said Anne, taking up the dress, "I think, if they took it back for sixty guineas, it would be better than having the dress useless by you."

"Take it back, Miss Higgins!" said Mrs. Barker, in all the tetchiness of disappointment; "why you must be mad—mad to *think* of such a thing; do not you see it is cut and slashed, and before too—the stomacher and all? What could lord Melford die for," and she laughed, but more in bitterness of spirit than any thing else, "so provokingly!"

"We must hope for the best."

"Best! why there is nothing to hope. I *must* take it, so do you go down to Barker; as for *me*, I shall not make my appearance any more to-night."

"Would it not be better—I beg pardon though for advising—but if Mr. Barker *knew*?"

"Knew! not for worlds! Tell him I have the headache—any thing—but not a

weed of the dress. I must manage as well as I can. Send him up in a good humour; as for the rest, we shall see."

"What, is Livy mad about the ball? Well, Miss Higgins, you must think with me, it was a famous thing she did not buy that dress," said Mr. Barker. "I have thought about it ever since; as soon as ever I heard the news, thinks I to myself, Livy will be glad she did not buy that Valenciennes dress; such an *immense* sum, you know—an enormous expence," said Mr. Barker, in a self-satisfied tone—"altogether too just at this time, the Alby election coming on; one wants all the money one can spare, and seventy guineas is no little sum, as I said before. Women must be *taught* to consider if——But no matter neither, as Livy did not have the dress; but still she ought to acknowledge *I* was right; do not you think so, Miss Higgins? Oh! by-the-bye, Mr. Belfield stands no chance of getting his election; as for Tomlinson, I will stand by Tomlinson, for I hate the Whigs; and if money

will do any good, money he shall have from me, for I am not vastly fond of Mr. Belfield."

The candidates for the borough of Alby were all spirited young men, with large fortunes, which are indispensably requisite in a member, we know. Mr. Tomlinson was a man of *tact*, fashion, and rank, quite a *flash-in-the-pan* sort of a being; he fascinated and pleased a thousand, where Belfield only pleased one—he was all for effect, dash, and show. Then came colonel Witley, who had more money than wit, but still he always *seemed* to know more than he chose to express; he was grave—dignified, some thought; we think that it was only the command of his carriage, and demeanour, and that dignity and colonel Witley were not assimilated.

Mrs. Barker found herself quite in her element, amid the bustle of the election. There were colours to be made, and gentlemen to be entertained, who were engaged in Mr. Tomlinson's interest. He-

dingham Lodge was one continued accession of company, bustle, and gaiety. Then there was something so delightfully grand in assisting the member—something so important, so charmingly important, in dashing about in the Tomlinson favours, with a whole host of gentlemen, and Barker seemed to have forgotten the word *expence*. All went on so delightfully, she was absolutely happy—for *her* quite happy. Sometimes the Valenciennes dress came across her imagination, but the next moment some one called, or she went out; and then there were hopes of an election ball, and over a blue slip the dress would do vastly well, for blue and white were Mr. Tomlinson's colours, and blue feathers with white ends, and pearl ornaments—oh! the retrospect was *charmante!*

Colonel Witley and Mr. Tomlinson were Whigs, staunch decided Whigs—Belfield a Tory. Every body thought Belfield a dead man. His friends canvassed, and rode their horses almost to death,

and themselves, till they vowed election-going was d——d fatiguing, and Bellfield gave himself up for lost.

Witley and Tomlinson seemed to carry the day; the contest between them was famously strong. The freemen were pleased with Tomlinson's address and affable manners; then he descanted so well on liberty and ministers, and his speeches always sounded so well, and there was such a deal of ready wit and persuasion in them. Not so colonel Witley's—he spoke, but seemed to withhold his sentiments; he seemed careful of promising too much—looked wise and important, and that was very persuasive, certainly.

The freemen demurred, and demurred; at last Tomlinson came in, and Barker was gratified. An election ball was to be given, and all went on delightfully.

During all this election tumult, Anna had been Mrs. Barker's constant companion, and now the election ball drew near, Mrs. Barker insisted on her staying; there would be Mr. Elliott and his bride, and

Mr. Bentinck and his lady, and—no, not Mr. Belfield, because he was thrown out; and—but in fact there would be every body; and the dress—yes, the dress would be useful, though lord Melford chose to die; and as to lady Melford, she would be no great loss, for though *she* thought herself beautiful, every body did not think so; and as to Barker, she would try to get money for her Valenciennes dress, if possible, and so pay the lady she had borrowed it of, or half—if it was only half, it would be better than none. When a favourable opportunity occurred, she should try him.

This favourable opportunity occurred the next day at dinner, when Barker was in an excellent frame of mind; Mrs. Barker gave a glance at Anna, and began to sound.—"So we have had those envious girls, the Crostwicks, here this morning," said Mrs. Barker.

"Oh, have you?" and Barker went on with his dinner very composedly.

"Yes; what *envious* girls they are!"

"Are they? Well, help me to some lobster sauce, will you, my dear?"

"Yes; you know the Crostwicks are so odd."

"So odd, are they? Miss Higgins, you eat nothing. My dear Livy, help your friend to something. James, change my plate."

"Ah, Barker! they have spoiled all our morning, for they staid at least two hours."

"Two hours! Well, I wish they had not boiled this fish two hours, for that is what I suppose they have done; it is really good for nothing."

"Well, but, Barker, these Crostwicks are going to the election ball, and they—"

"Livy, dear, help Miss Higgins to some fowl."

"Well, but, Barker, I say, they are going; and Helen gives such a grand description of her dress, and seemed to triumph so—did not she, Miss Higgins?"

"Really I did not perceive, ma'am. I thought, on the contra——"

"Oh, you were talking to Mary. You know, Barker, Helen makes such remarks upon dress; and she said to me, *so* superciliously, I dare say, *you*, ma'am, will have a new——"

"Well, but what signified what *she* said?" said Barker, going on with his fish.

"Why, no! But then one hates to be laughed at; and if I went ever so——"

"Come, Livy, you are letting your chicken get cold, dear."

"I *must* tell, love, what Helen said."

"Never mind; I tell you," for in truth Barker was a little proud of his pretty little Olivia; "you will be as well dressed as they are."

"Why, I don't know; I have nothing but an *old* lace, and I have appeared in that so many times."

"Well, but come, I will give you one; Helen shall not say you are in an *old* dress."

"Oh, thank you, Barker; it shall *be* a lace," and she glanced at Anna.

"Why no, blue, Livy?"

"White *over* blue, Barker."

"Well then, white over blue, if you like."

"There," said Mrs. Barker, as Anna was alone with her in the evening; "this is the way to manage a husband; I told you I *should come off well.*"

CHAPTER VII.

Now Anna did not for a moment imagine the Miss Crostwicks were envious of Mrs. Barker's dress, nor, in fact, that *they* were capable of envy at all; she saw the little mind of Mrs. Barker in its true light, and felt something very similar to dislike towards her; and yet she always paid her such excessive attention, so unlike what she had evinced when Anna's father was alive, and she was only *the miser's daughter*, whom nobody cared about, nor nobody but her aunt Harcourt noticed.

Anna was aware of all this, and attributed to its right motive all this peculiar friendly treatment; but it would not do to resent the former coldness of the world. So thought our heroine, Anna, and so think we.

But to return to the election ball. The room was absolutely prepared—beautifully chalked. The ladies were descanting on their partners and their dresses. The morning of the eventful day arrived, and many a young heart beat high in pleasure and triumph.

"Well, Barker, I never reckoned of any thing so much in life," said Mrs. Barker; "and Miss Higgins has talked of little else—this ball I mean."

Barker made no reply, but by a sullen gloomy look at Olivia, and one almost as bad at Anna.

"You are not well, I am afraid?" said Mrs. Barker, in an inquiring tone.

"Yes, quite well. Pour out the tea, and don't teaze me," replied he.

"Teaze you! Why, now, this is too

bad; on the ball-day and all," said his lady, flippantly.

"Ball! I wish from my soul there had been none at all, that I do!"

And the rest of the meal passed away in total silence, Barker leaving the room as soon as he could.

"I dare say," said Mrs. Barker, "that favourite horse of Barker's is dead, that he has been in such a fright about. My dear, he is such an odd temper, I never know how to act. I dare say," she added, feeling a little uncomfortable, "the horse really *is* dead; I know the groom has been up with it two nights. I will ring, and know."

She did so, and was told the horse was fast recovering.

"Well, I cannot comprehend him now."

No more could Anna, but she held her peace.—"Something has occurred unpleasant, perhaps," she said, after a pause.

"Oh, my dear, he is thus on an average once a-week: he cannot give a rea-

son, if I ask for one: and I do not *often condescend* to that."

"I do not think Mr. Barker is *quite* well either," said Anna again.

"Well! oh, yes, he is well."

"I think I heard Mary, as she was dressing my hair, speaking of some cattle, cows, or something, which broke over into Mr. Barker's nursery of young trees. I think it was this morning; but——"

"Oh, I will ring, and hear; I love to be certain, for positively I want to account for his moroseness; you must allow he was actually morose this morning."

Mary was summoned, and detailed at length where the cows got over the railing —what trees they spoiled—who drove them out—and who found them in.

"Well, but whose cows were they?"

"Mr. Larolles's, ma'am."

Mrs. Barker seemed more attentive.—"Mr. Larolles's?"

"Yes, ma'am; and he has been right down abusing my master, ma'am."

Mrs. Barker coloured.

"And Tom told me, ma'am, *your* name was brought up, ma'am."

"Well, never mind, go along—fetch my bonnet—I am sorry the cows did so much damage, as Mr. Barker had set his heart on those trees. Miss Higgins, will you just take a turn on the lawn with me?"

"Now you know the *reason* of Mr. Barker's manner, you feel more comfortable, I hope, ma'am?" said Anna, as they walked.

"Comfortable—yes. Still one hates to be treated so. *You* will never, I know, tell the world how we live. But I am afraid I shall not enjoy this evening at all."

"I hope you will," said Anna, earnestly. "Oh, yes, ma'am, you must; and *you* know your dress will——"

"My dress! Happiness don't consist in a dress," said Mrs. Barker, sighing.

Anna felt a little astonished at this sentiment from Mrs. Barker; but when she looked at her, she saw she was very pale. —"*You* are not well?"

"Yes—this election—and I am really uncomfortable about Barker; really I never felt so before. I wish to see him, and yet I don't. Law! my dear Miss Higgins, if you have a mind to be happy, don't marry."

Anna made no ridiculous resolution, at all coalescing with Mrs. Barker's latter words, but was revolving in her mind, whether she could not be serviceable in healing the breach between the married folks.

Mrs. Barker was really in very bad spirits, and soon grew tired of walking on the lawn. Anna found herself alone in her dressing-room; there were pens, ink, and paper, most invitingly before her; and though she did not much admire Mrs. Barker, yet she did not wish to be unkind; and as, perhaps, a few gentle words might be productive of good, she *would* write; so down she sat, and composed the following lines:—

"DEAR SIR,

"I hope you will not be angry at my venturing to send this little note. Mrs. Barker is really very uncomfortable, and wishes, I rather believe, to see you; she is not aware of my writing this, only I know you would not wish to be unkind—I am certain of it, from what I have seen of you. Mrs. Barker is half ill with anxiety; I never saw her feel so much; this convinces me, as I hope it will you, that she really is exceedingly uncomfortable, and I may say unhappy, because she may imagine it is from some conduct of hers that you are angry with her.

I am,

DEAR SIR,

Yours respectfully,

A. H."

This note Anna sent by Mrs. Barker's waiting-woman. Mrs. Barker was in her bed-room, in tears, awaiting the arrival of

her husband, only to go one stage further into hysterics.

Anna did not expect any reply, and was rather surprised when she received back a few lines, merely expressing that Mr. Barker *was* certainly angry with his wife; on second thoughts, he was *much* hurt—more than he could express. He was sorry she was unhappy; it was a pity women did not consider before they did things; however he would go and see her.

Wonderful to say, Mrs. Barker did not go into hysterics, but received her husband in silence—profound silence.

"I have found it out, Olivia," said he, in a cold manner, sitting down.

"What have you found out?" she replied, trying to be calm.

"Nay, *you* know; the dress—the Valenciennes dress. You would buy it, after all I said.

Mrs. Barker was silent.

"You deceived me. If it had not been for the cows, I might never have known.

I hate to be deceived, it makes one look so much like a fool."

"Deceived!" said Mrs. Barker, turning *very* pale.

"And there, your borrowing the money—the seventy guineas, I mean, Mrs. Barker; why, it is all spread. Don't you think, now, Larolles will tell the world? all Alby will know; what could you be thinking of? *I* could not, for the soul of me, think what Larolles meant, when he said, after I had told him he should pay for his cows' trespasses—'Why, you are a poor pitiful fellow, for *your* wife was forced to borrow money of *my* wife to pay for her election ball-dress.' So I demanded an explanation, and he told me the whole affair. I never was so mad in my life."

"Well, but just hear me, Barker."

"Hear you! why you cannot deny but that you borrowed the money; and you cannot deny but what the report will spread."

Mrs. Barker looked aghast, then recovered a little, and seemed calmer.

"Now, I gave you ten guineas for a dress, Livy."

"You did, I own."

"Then why did not you tell me then? finesse upon finesse is too much for any man: and to *borrow*, and of all women in the world, Mrs. Larolles! and Larolles to abuse me! what could you be thinking about?"

Mrs. Barker saw no resource to avert the anger of her husband but one; she saw he was angry, very angry: his pride was mortified dreadfully, and so was his lady's.—"Now, Barker, if you *would* hear me—just half-a-dozen words. The dress was certainly bought by me, but not for myself."

"*Not* for yourself!"

"No, Miss Higgins. Her guardians keep her *very* close, for perhaps they think she does not altogether know the value of money."

"Bought for Miss Higgins!" repeated Barker.

"Yes, but it is a secret; don't say *I* let it out."

"But Larolles positively said *you* borrowed——"

"Well, love, so I *did;* but could I not borrow it *for* Miss Higgins?"

"Well, but then I don't altogether understand Miss Higgins;" and Barker produced the note she had written to him, read it aloud, and seemed dubious *what* to think.

"You see she was fearful *I* might incur the blame."

"Yes; but then how did she know that I was aware of its being found out?"

"Oh, I don't know; guessed it from your manner this morning."

"Why, I was not angry with *her*. I always endeavour to treat Miss Higgins well, because she is so amiable, at least I think so; and I don't think *I* am the only one."

"Well, but not a word of this dress, Barker, on any account whatever."

"No."

"One would not wish to be thought to break confidence."

"Certainly. But I cannot comprehend *why* Miss Higgins did not ask in her own name."

"Because she does not know Mrs. Larolles. In fact, she wished so much for the dress, and *I* thought——"

"Well, but I wish you had had no hand in borrowing this money, because I hate you should seem obliged to the Larolleses. Larolles is a devil of a Tory; could not you say the money was *not* for yourself, for the very appearance of the affair——"

"Oh, not for worlds, Barker! What! after I promised Miss Higgins? No, no; let the matter rest; every one knows the Larolleses are disagreeable people."

"I wonder you thought of applying to *them*," said Barker, dryly.

"To *them!* It was only *Mrs.* Larolles; and so, dear Barker, don't think any thing more about it. You know I was so unhappy, I did not know what to do this morning, whether to tell you or not, for I thought you were angry something about the dress; and yet one hates to *betray;* there is something so degrading in *betraying* confidence."

"Why, yes; but had Miss Higgins no friend? Why, she might have asked me."

"Well, so she might; but she does not think of every thing, so don't say any more about it; I will get her to pay Mrs. Larolles directly—to-morrow, if she borrows the money of *you,* for she has been out a great deal lately, and dresses are expensive. I will manage that; so now let us go down to dinner."

Barker was forced to be satisfied; still he thought the affair altogether strange and incomprehensible; somehow he never imagined Anna would have done such a thing; but he was glad there were hopes of Mrs. Larolles being paid, for the op-

probrium (if there was any) certainly rested with Mrs. Barker: and then for Larolles to tell him he was a pitiful fellow, and his wife was *obliged* to borrow money for her dresses, was a thing not easily to be over come.

Meantime, Mrs. Barker had *flown* to Anna's apartment—begged her to say the dress was purchased for her—entreated her by every argument she could suggest; their happiness was at stake; she should be obliged to her for ever and ever! if she would *just* say, only say the Valenciennes dress was for her. It was so easy only to say yes, if she was asked. Barker would never forgive her if he found her out. Oh, she should be so glad, so gratified, if Anna would!

"But you have already told Mr. Barker, ma'am, that the dress was for me," said Anna.

"Yes, I know it; but if you are *asked*—"

"I cannot imagine what Mr. Barker can think of me?" said Anna, seriously. "He *must* think——"

"Oh, my dear girl! do make me this promise; say the dress was *for* you; you will prevent such serious unhappiness between us. I know," and she looked into Anna's open countenance, "I know I have acted foolishly, very foolishly; but there are times when every body does wrong."

"Most assuredly; but——"

"Well, promise me then about the dress."

"Really I cannot. Mr. Barker will not ask me, I hope. Thus far I will say, that I shall not undeceive him; he may remain under the impression that the dress was for me."

"Well, really you are very kind; and what do you think I promised? that Mr. Larolles should be paid to-morrow, because he abused Barker so; so I said, if you borrowed the money of some one else, that debt should be discharged."

In truth, Anna looked a little blank at this intelligence—she felt she had been degraded as it were.

"I see you are not pleased. I own I was guilty of an unpardonable liberty; but I knew not what to say, Barker seemed so angry—so very angry."

"But how is the money to be paid, ma'am?" inquired Anna.

"Why, that I *cannot* tell. The fact is," and Mrs. Barker shed a convenient flood of tears; "the fact is, if *you* cannot assist me, all *must* come out, and Barker will never forgive me."

Anna felt a little affected; she mentioned Mrs. Harcourt.

"Mrs. Harcourt! oh, no!" *she* was the *last* person in the world she should think of applying to.

Anna acknowledged her inability to assist Mrs. Barker with the sum.

"Can you lend me *any* money—even twenty guineas?"

Not more than thirty guineas had Anna in her possession at that moment; they were perfectly at Mrs. Barker's service.

Mrs. Barker remembered she could

easily part with some old ornaments. Perhaps altogether she could muster sufficient to pay for the dress; if so, Barker would never know.

Anna acquiesced silently; and having arranged that the Valenciennes dress must not be worn by Mrs. Barker that evening, they separated.

CHAPTER VIII.

Demetri, teque Tigelli,
Discipularum inter jubeo plorare Cathedras.

HORACE.

TRANSLATION.

"I scorn Tigellius and Demetrius' noise;
Dull blockheads! let them pipe among their boys,
And mind their schools."

To have a beautiful Valenciennes dress lying in uselessness, and to go in an old lace, was ever any thing half so provoking? However, so the fates decreed it, and the Barkers went off to the ball.

Now an election ball is not very interesting to detail, nor would the detail be interesting if entered into; therefore, assuring the reader our heroine, Anna, had plenty of dashing partners, independent of her being the *miser's daughter*, and not *exquisitely handsome*, we take our leave of the ball, and turn to a different occurrence, the death of Mrs. Harcourt, which obliged Anna to be a resident with one of her guardians; and she repaired, as soon as the last solemn duties were paid her dear friend, to Mr. Forster's. She appeared lonely in the wide world; her relations were mostly low-born vulgar people; and though her good heart prompted her to assist those who needed it, yet she felt they were no companions for *her*.

"So Miss Higgins is come," said Paul Forster, dashing down his Blackstone; "no more of you to-day, my old boy; so, if I am *wise*, my father says, ay, *if* I am wise, I may be rich. I wonder whether she is pretty? No, not the least, I see. Father, I shall not be *wise*, I find."

Paul was alone in the study as he spoke, fagging over the law, or rather with the book open before him, his head running on a new tandem of Peter Wilkes; and he had marked out upon the table, with his penknife, the exact frame of this aforesaid vehicle, the horses, and his friend, and a dog running by the side.

"Well, come, I will go down to dinner. No, I will not, I will dress first; a fellow never looks well *en dishabille*—so here's off!"

Paul could not help thinking to himself, as he drew on his last New Bond-street coat—"No, I am *afraid* I shall not like her. Plain—no, I *don't* like a plain woman at all; a plain man may do, but a plain woman is horrid: and then her figure (and he regarded his own in the glass) is bad, and that's another terrible thing."

During the time this passed, Anna had been introduced to Mrs. Forster, and welcomed with the greatest hospitality. As for Mr. Forster, he was a man of tact, a

solicitor of eminence, and also a man of the world; he met her, said every thing the occasion warranted—was not the least at a stand for conversation, but began to amuse Anna, as *he* thought *she* liked to be amused. At last the dinner-hour arrived, and then came Paul; bows and an introduction, of course, followed.—"Not so *very* plain," thought he; "but no fashion in her; and fashion, upon my soul, is every thing!"

"Paul, help Miss Higgins—Paul, pray be a little attentive; Paul, pick the finest cherries for Miss Higgins," said the fractious Mrs. Forster. "Bless me, Miss Higgins, you have nothing to eat; you will be starved here, ma'am, every body is *so* inattentive. William, change Miss Higgins's plate. Miss Higgins will eat some grapes, Paul. Paul, the grapes for Miss Higgins."

Thus passed the dinner and dessert; then came Paul's turn to amuse, for Mrs. Forster had a sick headache, and Mr.

Forster had business to attend to; so Paul, twitching up his collar, began—"You had a cool ride this morning, ma'am."

"Very, sir," and a bow.

A devilish genteel bow too, Paul thought; but he went on.—"You know the Miss Plumptrees, I think. Clarence Plumptree broke his arm this morning."

Anna turned red, and then pale, and expressed her surprise and concern.

"His horse fell; Cameron thought it dangerous at first, and even now he thinks him not totally *out* of danger."

Anna felt oppressed, even to tears.

"But this is only common report."

Anna revived a little.

"And that is very little to be depended on."

"Certainly not. I *hope* not, at least."

With any one else Paul would have jested, at hearing so peculiar an emphasis laid on the word *hope;* but he felt a sort of respect for Anna's feelings, and remained silent.—"I have a great mind to send and know how he is," added he, after a pause.

"Do, pray do," said Anna, earnestly.

And Paul *could* not forbear a smile.—"Hang me," thought he, as he went to give the message to a servant, "hang me if she *is* plain! her face interests, but yet she wants more fashion; more fashion and she will do."

"What think you of my ward?" said Mr. Forster, as he met Paul on the steps. "Agreeable, is not she?"

"Agreeable, father! yes; but not fashionable."

"Damn fashion! Why she is a famous fine fortune, and you have none."

"I know it," said Paul, laconically and dryly.

"I am abrupt, but——"

"I will tell you what, father," said Paul, closing the hall-door, "Clarence Plumptree—in fact, I heard, *before* Miss Higgins came, that she liked him."

"Psha! nonsense! Clarence Plumptree has no figure, no (and Mr. Forster felt himself obliged to use that word) fashion, no—to be brief, Paul——"

"I *know* she likes him, father."

"Like! psha, boy! Compare yourself and Clarence Plumptree."

"I am *sure* she likes him."

"Well, *if* she does; but if she *does not*, Paul?"

"Why, if she had more beauty—but I must study—I have no time for love."

"Yes, yes, you must study, and you wont marry yet," said the father.

"Marry! no," and Paul walked away.

Anna had not quite enough character to please Paul at first, but he confessed he was a little interested; but Peter Wilkes hated all women who were not handsome, and Peter Wilkes was his oracle; and then he was only twenty-two, and no fellow married young. But if he married, that is, if Anna would have him—and he did not *seriously* think she would refuse him (though he wished to impress his father with an idea that she liked Clarence Plumptree)—he could keep a famous stud, and that devilish dry study, the law, would never plague him again.

Day after day passed, and Anna, who was not a girl whose character was developed in an hour, pleased Paul very much. If there was not much high fashion in her manners, there was a great deal of open-hearted candour and frankness; and then again, she never shewed off; he could certainly have wished her handsomer; but he thought, 'pon his soul, he *could* like her.

"What do you think of Miss Higgins?" said Paul, as he sat with Peter Wilkes, fishing; "an ugly girl, is not she?" he added, carelessly.

"Ugly! why, I do not know—there is a bite, by God!"

"You do not think her good-looking, to be sure?"

"Why, damn the hook!—good looking? yes, she is good-looking enough."

"Tolerable eyes."

"Why does not this devil of a fellow bring us some more baits?"

"I say, Wilkes, tolerable eyes, has not she?"

"Tolerable—yes."

"Plays well?"

"Not much execution—Bell Devereux now——"

"But a good deal of sweetness, Wilkes."

"There is a bite. When are you off to Gray's Inn?"

"I—I do not know—perhaps never."

"Never!—there's a nibble—never! what, are you going to marry?"

"Lord! marry—no."

"'Pon my soul! I think you are."

"No."

"Well, there's your father's ward, a decent-looking girl, with a fine fortune, wanting a husband—you a *tolerable*-looking fellow, wanting a fortune—'pon my soul! it would be a good thing."

"I dare say it would," said Paul, composedly throwing in his line.

"And she is over head and ears in love with you."

"I am afraid not," said Paul, incautiously.

"*Afraid!*

"No, not afraid, either," said Paul, recovering himself.

"And Gray's Inn—why, Gray's Inn, Paul, is a damnable stupid place; and the law——"

"Ah! the law is not much better."

"No. Well, my boy."

"Well! what?"

"There is Miss Higgins—my advice is—damn the bait! it is off the hook—now, if you like her, marry—'pon my soul, it will be a famous thing!"

Paul was aware it would be a good thing—"So *you* advise me?"

"Yes, seriously; faith, I really *do* think her good-looking.

"Well, but perhaps she wont have me?"

"No fear of that;" and thus terminated the young men's conversation.

Now, reader, just one word on Peter Wilkes, Paul's beloved factotum, a young man of good fortune, no peculiar ability, a tolerable understanding, and nothing in the world to do, but to spend his money

in style—that is, building tandems that nobody dare get in *but* Paul and himself.

Now Mr. Forster had previously warned Paul that he must never *think* of a woman without fortune; he had gently insinuated, as soon as Mrs. Harcourt died, Miss Higgins would in all probability come to reside with them, and that she was a pleasing girl, plain, but was extremely agreeable; and money—Paul *must* marry where there was money.

Paul was not one of those who hated advice; he was too easily led, rather indolent in his habits, and fond of ease, horses, and dash. Paul saw how his father wished him to act; he hated study, but if he had no fortune, it would be absolutely necessary. So he considered what he should do; Miss Higgins was very agreeable; but then, all things considered, would *she* have him? he did not *really* think Clarence Plumptree any impediment. To be sure, Mr. Belfield had called several times, but then calls were nothing; he had walked out with her on the lawn repeat-

edly—but no, he thought Belfield was no peculiar rival. Still it would be better to secure her in time; he began to like her devilishly, there was such a playful ease in her manners, and she was so lively, so animated, particularly the last three weeks she had been at Leyden; and then she was a famous fine temper.

Mr. and Mrs. Forster did not care much that Anna should be so *very* intimate at the Plumptrees. Clarence was a fine, open-hearted, fascinating young man, and young people sometimes took unaccountable strange whims into their heads, and in another half-year Anna would be of age.

"It will rain, I am certain," said Mrs. Forster, as Anna was waiting, ready dressed, to go to the Plumptrees; "there are clouds all round—in fact, it is like nothing else."

"Do you think so, ma'am?" said Anna.

"Oh, yes, my dear! and your new habit, you know, would be spoiled—greens spot so terribly."

"There is the sun shining."

"Very likely; when there are such bursts out of the sun, you are sure of a shower, and sending a servant will do just as well; the Plumptrees wont expect you, my dear."

"I promised faithfully."

"Clarence is getting better every day too—Paul says so."

"Oh! but I am not going to see Mr. Clarence, ma'am."

"No, I know it."

"Well, ma'am, the carriage—if it does rain, I can have that."

No, Mrs. Forster had a call to make, she could not put off on any account whatever.

The sun would keep shining maliciously, and Anna's horse was brought to the door.

"You will return to dinner, Miss Higgins?" said Mrs. Forster, as Anna was leaving the room; "you *must*, my love; there is a black cloud now—well, if that habit was mine, I would not go on any

account. You will return to dinner, wont you?"

"I cannot promise, for Mrs. Beutinck is to be there, and——"

"But here is a party to tea, my dear Miss Higgins, and riding in the evening, consider. There is Mr. Belfield's servant now come down the sweep, with those books; I dare say now he has brought a note."

"It is of no great consequence, I dare say, ma'am. Good-morning! if I can possibly, I will return to dinner."

"Oh! you wont return, I know," thought Mrs. Forster, and she shut the door.

Mr. Belfield's servant brought a letter. Mrs. Forster turned it over and over, looked at the seal, the address, and thought if it *should* be an offer. Belfield had been very attentive, more attentive than she or Mr. Forster altogether approved, though he was too much a man of the world to let it appear that he had any objection to Mr. Belfield's visits.

But this letter disconcerted Mrs. Forster sadly; it was *quite* full, even the sides, and then checked, and evidently written in Mr. Belfield's own hand.

"Mr. Forster, I *do* believe here is an offer for Miss Higgins," said she, as he entered the room; "and of all people in the world, who do you think?"

"Clarence Plumptree, perhaps," replied he, quite composedly.

"Oh! no, Mr. Belfield; and, 'pon my word! my dear, I *do* think she likes him."

"Psha! she likes Paul," said Mr. Forster.

"So she may; but only think of Dacresfield House; and then he may have the Luttridge title."

"A little spiced with ambition then?"

"No, I do not think her ambitious."

"But our Paul has a good deal of address; and, in fact, *I* think Belfield stands no chance against Plumptree or Paul."

"She is gone to the Plumptrees to call. I do not like the Plumptrees."

"Nor I, but we must not appear to *dislike* them, Mrs. Forster; my ward is gentle and mild, but *she* has a great liking for them, so it will be best to say nothing. I would not have Paul dilatory; he is a lazy fellow, I doubt; and the law he hates as much as I do the devil. Paul must be roused—*if* he likes her, no fear."

"But then he wants beauty, and a fortune too, in a wife."

"Yes, but I can reason with him, and lately he has made no point of beauty; and from many reasons *I* think we may bring the marriage about."

CHAPTER IX.

"Why, I'd as soon be hanged as study."

"So here is for old Blackstone again," said Paul, throwing himself into one of the study chairs. "Nature never intended me for a man of business; and as to the law—of all the stupid things in the world, the law is the most so; fag, fag, fag, and no——"

"And no what?" exclaimed his father, entering at the moment.

"No pleasure, father."

"Well, pleasure and fortune are all in your own power; upon second thoughts though, I do not know whether you are quite so sure."

Paul opened his brown eyes.

"You *must* know to what I allude, for

you are not a stupid fellow, only you are so lazy, so dilatory."

"Why, father, on Monday it was not possible for me to *look* into a book, for we were at Mr. Belfield's—Tuesday——"

"Well, never mind that; you can have a fortune, and do not want to study."

"No, I do not know that, father."

"Why, Miss Higgins, boy."

"Yes, but——"

"But I suppose you will tell me you do not want to marry *yet;* but Miss Higgins is a girl likely to *take*, though she is not handsome; and therefore, *if* she will have you——"

"*If* she will have me?" repeated Paul, clapping his Blackstone on the table; "why, father, it was but the other day you told me you were *sure* she liked me."

"Well, and if I did, I thought so at the time; but between Clarence Plumptree and Mr. Belfield, and possibly others, she——"

"I know she does not care a fly for Clarence, father."

"But Belfield—all women are a little ambitious, perhaps, and Belfield has fine prospects; and if she finds you do not come forward, she may marry him; in fact, we have (that is, your mother and I) every reason to suppose there is a letter from him now in the house, most probably an offer."

"Very well then, let her accept that offer, if she prefers him to me."

"Psha! now that is nonsense—a boy's pride quite."

"No, father, it is not. I hate ambitious women—I never knew any good come of them. Miss Higgins is not ambitious—she is too superior to be ambitious; so if she accepts Mr. Belfield, why, it won't be ambition; and if she rejects him—if I think seriously she *will* have me, I will make her an offer."

"Well, but Paul——"

"Father, this is my determination."

"And if it is, it is a good one; but let me give you a little advice."

Paul rested his elbows on the table, and listened attentively.

"Do not be dilatory—such fine fortunes are not met with every day, nor such pleasing girls. Between ourselves, a man must have some merit to gain the affections of *such* a girl—no man of a common stamp *will*, depend on it. I do not think she is over head and ears in love with you, but much interested in you, and certainly prefers you; but she wont bear to be trifled with, I can tell you. Now, Paul, mind what I say to you."

"Yes, father, but——"

"No more buts—secure her. Think of what I have said to you; remember there is independence, without study, or fag, or any thing else, but just saying a few words; and it is evident you like her. So, my boy, you are in a fair way to become a rich man without any trouble."

"Very evident I like her!" thought Paul, as soon as his father had left the room; "I do not altogether see how that

should be. I have walked with her—so has Belfield. To be sure, I cannot help feeling pleased when I see her, because she is not a pretty girl—no—but she is pleasing; and Peter Wilkes says she *is* very good-looking. No Blackstone—old boy, you may rest for me. I will have Anna, *if* Anna will have me; so, father, I shall please you and myself too."

"So Miss Higgins is not returned yet?" said Mr. Forster.

"Oh no! I was certain she would stay; she promised to return too. But the carriage can be sent in the evening, for *I* shall not want it, my dear," replied his lady.

So it was settled, and Anna was conveyed home to Leyden early in the evening, because the roads were dangerous, and the nights dark; and Mrs. Forster was afraid, very *much* afraid, some accident *might* occur, no telling what.

She left the Plumptrees, rather unwillingly, we own, for it was a family party, and they were always so delightfully so-

cible; and Mrs. Bentinck was in charming spirits, and her mother and sisters were so delighted to see her; and Clarence was nearly recovered.

So Anna came to Leyden; not but what she would have staid another half-hour, but Mrs. Forster said, in a little note which she sent, she wanted her *particularly* to come home early; independent of the dark nights, there was another reason which prompted her to ask, as a great favour, that Anna would not disappoint her—her party.

"So, my love, here is a letter for you," said Mrs. Forster, as Anna was in her dressing-room; "you doubtless are aware who it comes from."

"I, ma'am?" and Anna blushed as she looked at the address.

"Yes, I told Paul *I* thought what it was—*poor* Paul! but no matter. Mr. Belfield will be a happy man: to be sure, his temper—but *I* have no right to say any thing—report always exaggerates."

Anna opened the letter—"This is no

offer, upon my honour, ma'am!—merely extracts from a favourite work, 'Rigby's Translation of Italian Agriculture,' Mr. Belfield promised me."

Mrs. Foster looked incredulous, but Anna's unembarrassed manner reassured her; there was a frankness too she felt she had no right to doubt—"Well, I thought, so did Paul, my dear Miss Higgins, that it certainly *was* an offer—I was afraid we were going to lose you."

"You imagined then, as a matter of course, I should accept Mr. Belfield?" replied Anna, gaily. "Only think, my dear ma'am, how proud he is! I never for a moment imagined *he* would ever make *me* an offer; besides, he prides himself on his family, and mine is——"

"And to marry a person who is ridiculously proud of his family, is very disagreeable, I assure you, Miss Higgins. I once knew a lady who was quite miserable, you know; not a day passed but she underwent some mortification or other;

and I declare Mr. Belfield was just such another man as he was."

Anna listened with deep interest.

"Mr. Belfield has paid you much attention for *him*; and really *I* thought this letter was an offer; and yet I felt afraid for your sake that it was not."

"For *my* sake, ma'am!" said Anna, seriously. "I hope I never gave any one reason to suppose I regarded Mr. Belfield more than a friend. I do take pleasure in his society, I own, because he is a man of information; but as to any thing to what you allude, I must declare myself quite at a loss to imagine how you could——"

"Well, but I *only* thought," said Mrs. Forster, going on with the sounding scheme, "I only thought—surmised indeed—that you *might* like him."

"Oh! I do *like* him—I always liked him, ma'am."

"And perhaps you would really prefer him to any one you have ever seen?"

Anna was silent, and felt no inclination whatever to make any kind of reply.

"Now Mr. Foster and myself will be so glad to see you *happily* settled—*handsomely* settled you must be; for if you marry a man without fortune, your own noble one is sufficient."

"Yes, assuredly, ma'am."

"Well then, good-night, my dear Miss Higgins! I must say I am glad you are not going to be Mrs. Belfield; pride ruins all happiness, take my word for it. Oh! by-the-bye, Paul will drive you out in the new poney-gig to-morrow, just to try it, you know—good-night!"

Now, pride of all things in the world is the most troublesome and disagreeable. One hates to be pestered with low-bred relations, or to have one's button held by a shabby-dressed friend in the street, in sight perhaps of lady M——'s splendid equipage, or the honourable St. Leger's tilbury, whom we were introduced to a few evenings since, in some dashing ball-room.

This is one sort of pride, and every body has something to be proud of, either their

money, their forms, their faces, or themselves. The author, for his part, is proud of his abilities—the connoisseur of his relics—the peer of his pedigree—and we, for our parts, are reckoned proud, no matter for what, but so it is.

Belfield, like many others, regarded Anna more than he was aware of. He began by liking her—then he lent her books, and on a further acquaintance with her, he found she only wanted *drawing out*, as the phrase has it, to be very agreeable indeed. Then he became interested in her, and occasionally he received little notes—these he detected himself in preserving; and when he answered those little notes, he imperceptibly began his billets, "Madam," then "Dear Madam;" then he felt a greater pleasure than he had ever before known (except when Isabel had honoured him with a letter) in writing to her; and every volume he knew *she* admired, he began to feel a greater interest in.

She was something like Isabel too, and

her manners were just as easy and as frank as hers. He examined his heart—no, it must not be—"*The miser Higgins's daughter!*"—pride could not admit it—"a cork-cutter's daughter!" To be sure she was every thing he could wish her, but—no, he found his pride was very dear to him; and then all her low-bred relations—dreadful!

Under the spell of his pride, he did not visit Leyden for several weeks. At last he heard that Miss Higgins was seriously engaged—"Not very unlikely," thought he; and he wondered to whom. The next news he heard was that it was false, and he felt very glad at that intelligence, so glad, that he rode over to Leyden, merely to call.

Anna met him as if she was glad to see him (we hate a cool reception ourselves); he never observed her to look so well, whether mourning became her, or that fate had determined he should feel more interested in her, we know not, but so it was. So pleased was he with her, that he went

home to Dacresfield, and absolutely framed a letter up, telling one of the oldest told stories of love in existence, in, perhaps, the strangest way ever mortal wrote, inserting various clauses about family, and so forth, and her renouncing all communication with those whose rank in life might be derogatory to her*, &c. He candidly told her he had combated with his pride some time, and he was still under its dominion. He requested to know her determination immediately, and so his letter terminated.

Hers was as follows.

" SIR,

" It gives me concern to be under the necessity of creating you pain, but as I am still 'a little under the dominion of *my* pride,' and could not on any account comply with what you inferred in your letter, I am willing to let you know my determination immediately.

* Mr. Belfield here alludes to the Miss Millers.

"The obligations I am under to the Miss Millers I can never forget, nor will I. I am indebted to them for more than I can express; and were I to be elevated to the highest sphere in the world, common gratitude would make me treat them as I always have.

"Though I, perhaps, may never recover the time I lost when young, and though I am aware how faulty my education must necessarily be, yet I must own myself everlastingly obliged to them; and under this impression, I shall always conduct myself to them in the manner my heart prompts. To the Miss Millers I am indebted for my proficiency in the Italian and French languages, and many other things, too numerous to mention; and as I could never bring myself to consider '*their acquaintance as derogatory to my rank in life*,' let me be married to whom I might, and as your pride yet objects to *me*, and as my family is so degradingly beneath your own, permit me, sir, to say, I am obliged by the offer of

your hand, but *my* pride will not let me accept it, *on any account whatever.*

"It is not my intention to be abrupt, but I feel it is my duty to do every thing which I can in justice to myself for my relations; and those who marry me, I hope will not raise any objections to such resolutions.

"And wishing you every happiness,
I am, SIR,
Your obliged, &c.
"ANNA HIGGINS.

"*Leyden.*"

CHAPTER X.

"Well, but I hate making the offer," said Paul Forster to his oracle, Peter Wilkes, as they were walking on the lawn before breakfast.

"Well, but if she likes you?" said Peter.

"My mother said—she seemed to infer—she did not care for money."

"Well then, it is a queer thing to do; but I will sound, I will beat about the bush, if I could see her alone; I have a little penetration, and I should soon know; for it is an awkward thing to be refused—a devilish awkward thing, upon my soul! I know what it is, damme; don't you remember? Upon my soul, Charlotte was the best quadrille-dancer anywhere; poor Charlotte, she is gone, and *now* I shall be a bachelor for her sake, my boy, though

she refused me. Damme, Paul, I loved her, though she refused me; and so I shall to the day of my death."

We have often observed the human heart wince from its real galling wretchedness, under the appearance of *nonchalance* and gaiety; Peter, who would have been a different man doubtless if he had had a different education, had a good heart; and if Charlotte had relented and lived,

> "The world to him would not have been
> A dreary waste, and hunting scene."

"Poor Charlotte! damme, Paul, I think I see her now, as she was dressed at the last waltz ball. Damme, I shall never love another as I did her. But there's *your* girl! so I am off on a sounding expedition."

Paul saw Anna just turning down the shrubbery-walk, and in a moment, or at least as soon as it was possible for Peter to be at her side, he offered her his arm, and, accepting it, they strolled on.

"Paul's a good-hearted fellow," said Peter, carelessly.

"Yes, very," replied Anna, warmly.

"Very good sense, I think, altogether," continued Peter, in the same tone.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes; don't you?"

"Yes; he is good-hearted too. There is a sincerity in his manners I like. He seems rather too easily led though; he does not act enough for himself."

"You mistake; Forster is an odd man, and he will be obeyed; Paul wisely thinks it is better to submit at first than have disagreements."

"True."

"I go on poorly," thought Peter; "I will try another scheme.—Paul thinks about marrying, Miss Higgins."

"Indeed!"

And Peter cursed the Leghorn bonnets, with their deep peaks, for he could not catch a glimpse of Anna's face, and he thought that would be an excellent interpreter in the present case.—"Paul is very deserving."

"Very. I hope he is *likely* to be happy?"

"This looks well," thought Peter. "Yes, Paul never would make a foolish choice."

"No, I hope not."

"*Hope* again," thought Peter; "come, this looks well."

Anna changed the conversation as soon as she could, for Mr. Forster appeared from the garden door to summon them to breakfast, and to breakfast they went.

Paul had communed with Peter on his embassy; and after hearing the whole conversation, chapter and verse, and analysing each particular word, and asking Peter a hundred times the same question, he ventured to get into the poney-chaise with Anna, under the determination of making her an offer before his return.

"Paul, don't drive too near the banks; Miss Higgins, you know, is afraid.—Paul, take care; I would not have Miss Higgins take any hurt for the world.—Paul, you will not make us wait dinner, as Mr. Wilkes wants to be going as soon after

three as he can.—This is a delightful morning; you will have a charming ride," said Mrs. Forster, as she stood on the steps.

And after this harangue, Paul seated himself, and off they drove.—"I hope you sit comfortably, Miss Higgins?" said he, after driving her nearly half-a-mile in silence.

"Yes, thank you, quite so."

"The poney goes well."

"Yes; it is a very handsome one."

"Ah, it is!" and he felt no words would befriend him; and Paul began to think the office of making an offer horridly awkward; he did not know how to begin; and then, just as he had summed up a few words indicative of his feelings, Anna began an animated conversation on a very different subject; then the poney took fright—he expected nothing less but that he should have to turn hero, and save her; but she sat quite still, never screamed nor fainted; and after the poney had ran some way, it became gentle again, and they went on composedly with their ride.

Now Anna was somewhat aware of Paul's attachment to her; she was no coquette; therefore, simply by a certain ease of manner, she hoped to convince him she could esteem, but feel no tenderer sentiment towards him; she did not wish to give him the pain of a decided refusal. But Paul not being what we should term a man of sense or penetration, and having understood from his mother that Anna had nearly *hinted he was* the man of her affections, and that she should not think of fortune, &c. &c. still hoped; and then the law, the damned stupid study of the law. Besides, he felt he really loved Anna, though she was *not* pretty.—"Do you remember our ride to the Gravers?" said Paul, merely by the way of saying something.

"Yes, perfectly: it was one of the most delightful rides I ever experienced."

"Indeed!" and Paul somehow imagined he was connected with the ride being so very delightful.

Anna at that moment thought, from his manner, what was passing in his mind, and

she immediately exclaimed—"The morning was so beautiful, no one could help."

"Oh, it was the *morning!*" and Paul found he had said the very thing he did not mean to say.

"Yes, it *was* the morning," said Anna, frankly.

And Paul changed colour.—"I like your sincerity of manner!" exclaimed he, after a long silence. "In *general* I——"

"Do you? You never flatter, I know. I am so much the more gratified."

"Are you gratified by *my* good opinion? Now *you* flatter."

"I—no—I like the good opinion of any one, provided their opinion be worth having, Mr. Forster."

"This does not look *much* like love," thought Paul, "however.—Well then, I may not flatter myself *I* made the ride more agreeable," and Paul thought he was going on bravely.

"No, you may not. You may flatter yourself that I esteem you as a very sincere friend, and nothing further."

"Nothing further, Miss Higgins?" and Paul changed colour again.

"No," said Anna, gently, yet firmly, *nothing* further," and Paul was answered.

Paul could not talk during the rest of the ride, for the life and soul of him, but felt glad, yes, almost glad, when he found himself alone. A dreary prospect was before him; nothing but the law—the dull law to pursue. Anna would never have him, he was certain; he saw by her manner—he was convinced she would never have *him*. It *was* hard to part with one so amiable, but he was determined to go to Gray's Inn immediately, for the term of his articles was out; and absence, absence might cure him; at least he might forget her. Well then, Gray's Inn and study were all *his* views *now*.

"Well, how did you get on, Paul?" said Peter Wilkes, just as he was going in to dinner.

"Bad enough. She will not have me, Peter."

"Psha! Did you ask her?"

"I did in a manner."

"Well, come along; dinner is begun."

"I do not choose any to-day."

"Poor fellow! why, do not starve yourself."

"Starve myself! no; but I *cannot* come, Peter."

"Yes, do; you will set them all wondering. Whatever you feel, do not let people know it; that is my way, or rather *was* my way."

Paul, under this advice, went in to dinner, and save being a little absent, was much the same as usual. As for Mr. Forster, his penetrating eye soon discerned something amiss; and apprehensive what had occurred, he lost no time, as soon as dinner was over, in discussing the affair, and, to his infinite mortification, found his suspicions realized. He knew Anna's disposition was firm—*particularly* firm, in any thing of the love kind; she had a steadiness of manner, even he did not care to contend with; he thought her a superior girl, and with so much mind

and pure principle, that she would refuse, and keep to that determination, because she never did any thing without considering well.—"Well but, Paul, yours was not an absolute offer?"

"Father, it is all the offer I shall ever make Miss Higgins."

"Pooh! but women often say no, and mean yes."

"*She* never does. No, father, now it is Gray's Inn and the law—I am ready to go *to-morrow*. As for Miss Higgins, I wish *her* every happiness. I must get on as well as I can."

Well, to London Paul went; and as he was not either vicious or extravagant, he got on as well as his father could reasonably expect; he was stupid and slow, but there was one thing very much in his favour—whatever he once learned, he never forgot.

Mrs. Forster was horridly disappointed; she entirely reckoned on Anna's being her daughter-in-law—she really felt quite indignant at the idea of her refusing Paul,

poor Paul, who was fagging his young days away in London; and she was very well certain he would not live long; study was too much for Paul; Paul's last letter was written in such very bad spirits—poor Paul!

Anna heard all this, and at last, from many other inferences of Mrs. Forster's, she formed a resolution of leaving Leyden for Mr. Woodward's, her other guardian; but this idea Mr. Forster strenuously objected to; when she came of age, of course she would have an establishment of her own; till then, *if* she could make herself comfortable, his house was at her service. Besides, Mr. Woodward, though an elderly man, was unmarried, and doubtless Miss Higgins would feel the inconvenience of that.

Mr. Forster requested, if any thing was objectionable at Leyden, she would not hesitate a moment in saying so.

Anna could object to nothing, certainly; and the matter passed off.

Mrs. Barker was mad to go to town in

the winter, and also mad to take Miss Higgins with her; but Miss Higgins, from some private reasons, had no wish to accompany her thither. Independent of Mrs. Barker's extravagance, she was not a woman she very much admired; therefore a polite refusal was all that was necessary; and poor Mrs. Barker's scheme perished entirely, for her husband was making some grand alterations in Alby, on the late Mrs. Harcourt's estate, and on no account would he quit the country that year at least.

Clarence Plumptree was well enough to ride out; and as his professional duties obliged him to return to town, he was to quit his own home in a few days. Common politeness dictated a call upon Anna, and he set off to Leyden.

"So here's Mr. Clarence come," said Mrs. Forster, looking down the sweep, "to take his leave, I dare say."

"I suppose so," replied Anna, gently, going on with her work.

"And here is Mr. Belfield too, I declare."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Anna, jumping up, and blushing.

"Yes, but he is not coming in, I declare. Ah, he is *so* proud! *Paul* always thought him very disagreeable."

Now whether Clarence had any thing to impart to Anna is not known; but certain it is, Mrs. Forster kept herself fixed to her seat, as if immoveable, nor never stirred, only to curtsey to him as he left the room, wishing him his health, and so forth, and descanting on the care he should take of his arm which had been broken.

Fortune is the best thing in the world to introduce a person to the world; Anna found it so; and those who could not *see* her when she lived with her father at Alby, were really quite delighted with her when she was mistress of a large fortune. The Bellairs condescended to bow, when they saw Anna with lady Hunter's party at the grand quarterly ball; and as to Juliana Heaffort, she could not express

her delight. Mrs. Elliott behaved as she always had done; and Mr. Elliott appeared perfectly satisfied with his choice. Thus far all was well.

Mr. Belfield was at the ball, and Anna, who had felt her pride considerably mortified by his singular letter, was returning his bow rather distantly, when she perceived he still seemed rather interested in her, for he kept by her side till the first quadrille was nearly over, addressing his conversation chiefly to her, asking particularly whether she was at lady Hunter's staying; and when he understood she was resident at lady Hunter's till her own establishment was formed at Methold, he said he should be there on the Monday following to a hunting party, which would give him great pleasure.

Anna was uncommonly animated, and never looked better; when she mentioned the disagreement between herself and Mr. Forster, she simply stated the case, implicating her guardian as little as possible, and Belfield found his pride giving way

every succeeding moment; he loved her still; he saw she was a very superior girl; family and dignity of birth may be great things, but happiness is greater.

Belfield felt the whole truth of this; and though he saw she had very little personal attraction, and *was* of mean extraction, he was determined to make another essay towards gaining her hand; and if it failed, why he must submit.

Sir John Hunter's invitation to the hunting party was a most fortunate circumstance, as Belfield staid some days at his house; and lady Hunter, who was attached to our heroine, entered into such a favourable disquisition on her manners, that Belfield could not help feeling uncommonly gratified. She told Belfield Mr. Forster had been appropriating some of Anna's fortune to his own use; that there had been a slight difference between them; and from the general tenor of Anna's manners and conduct, she felt happy to offer her a home till Methold was ready for her reception.—"She is a charming

girl; the more I see of her, the more I like her, Mr. Belfield. Some people might imagine, as the early part of her life was passed with such a narrow-minded man as old Mr. Higgins, it might have affected *her*. I am happy to say her heart is as open as the day; and, in fact, I have seldom seen a female whose whole character was to me so very pleasing."

Belfield assented most heartily to this remark.

"And then, Mr. Belfield, her conduct to her relations is every thing it ought to be. Sir John says——" and lady Hunter stopped, for Anna was then approaching her.

"And what does sir John say?" asked Belfield, earnestly, in a low tone; "what does sir John say, your ladyship?"

"That——There I cannot tell you now—here she is."

"There," thought Belfield, "this is the first time I ever wished Anna away from me; but I am curious to know what sir John said, for he is a man of sound sense."

At last lady Hunter asked Anna to play a duet with her eldest daughter, and then Belfield renewed his inquiry.

"Sir John says she will make Clarence Plumptree a most happy man, and sir John——"

"Who?" said Belfield, almost starting off his chair.

"Clarence Plumptree. It is all a settled thing. Bless me, you seem surprised."

"I am very much surprised, I confess."

"Oh, he has been attached to her, it seems, a long time;" and it was a fortunate thing for Belfield lady Hunter was near-sighted; "and it is an excellent match; he is getting on as a barrister extremely well, and the family are all so amiable. When she was living with her father, the Plumptrees all met her somewhere, I forget now; but they did not evince the least pride, and ever since that she has quite loved them for it; so one thing brought on another, and Clarence came home for some time, once when she was

staying there. But I understood he would not make her an offer then; very likely you know he had nothing *to* offer; but now they are publicly engaged; and it will be a most happy match, I dare say."

"Doubtless," said Belfield, conquering his emotion; "doubtless."

"But you seemed so much surprised?"

"Lady Hunter, *I* came hither under the full impression of making Miss Higgins an offer. She had previously refused me; but as I hoped that might be only from the manner in which I made *that* offer, I flattered myself she so far esteemed me, as to be convinced I repented having said what I did in my letter to her."

This was a great deal for Belfield to say, and lady Hunter thought so.—"But, Mr. Belfield, you are not going?"

"Immediately. Will you be the bearer of a message to Miss Higgins? Tell her I *know* she will be happy; tell her *I* sincerely wish her so. Your ladyship will make my excuses to sir John. Good-evening!"

Lady Hunter felt affected—considerably so, and shook Belfield's extended hand in silence, for she could not speak, and he left the room.

CHAPTER XI.

Conclusion.

THERE had been a time when Anna would have preferred Mr. Belfield; it was when he made her the first offer; she saw his interminable pride—his love for family, rank, and connexion; she had pride as well as himself, but it was considerably wounded by his stiff letter—so wounded, that she felt much mortified and pained. It required a grand effort to answer his letter as she did; but afterwards she was glad she had done so.

Clarence Plumptree saw her and esteemed her; he was just the man calcu-

lated to make *her* truly happy; at least as happy as mortals can be; and then when she remembered how amiable he was, and how deserving, she insensibly yielded him her affections, not because he was a remarkably-fine young man, but because she felt all a woman ought to feel for the man she is going to marry.

Belfield saw what he had lost in Anna, and bitterly repented of his pride: *his* false pride certainly had ruined his happiness; in two instances he had felt its fatal effects; but, as Miss G—— observed, it was a very good thing, after all, he remained single; for there was his sister Caroline married all in a hurry to Mr. David Devereux; and every one knew he was over head and ears in debt, so Belfield's money would be highly acceptable to them. And poor Miss Higgins, poor thing! Miss G— did not wonder at her being glad to marry just any body, merely to change that horrible ugly name of hers. Poor Miss Devereux was Miss Devereux still; for after all her town campaigns, no one seemed in-

clined to have compassion: and then the title of coquette would not help her off; and Mrs. Branthwaite's money seemed to linger behind: and as for Miss Juliana Heaffort, the affair of her and Mr. Cervantes was so horridly blown, Miss G—— felt *afraid* she would add another to the list of disconsolate spinsters. She *heartily* wished Mr. and Mrs. Bentinck happy; but though all went on smoothly now, and the Plumptree family were apparently so happy, *she* dare say something would happen; *she* never knew things to go on well for a twelvemonth together.

Now leaving the reader to draw what inferences he pleases from Miss G——'s communication, we take our farewell of him, assuring him *we* think Clarence Plumptree has a great prospect of happiness with Anna, *the Miser's Daughter.*

THE

BEAUTIFUL COUNTESS.

"Human nature is but—human nature."

.....

Stultitiam patiantur opes. HORACE.

We have heard short prefaces are best; therefore we merely say, this Tale is compiled from real life.

THE

BEAUTIFUL COUNTESS.

CHAPTER I.

"Be wise to-day, 'tis madness to defer;
Procrastination is the thief of time."

"AND what letters am I to carry to-day, sir?" said Mr. Lowe's footman, opening the breakfast-room door.

"Letters!" said his master, taking his eyes off a newspaper.

"Yes, sir; you said I was to go to the post-office this morning, at nine."

"Oh! did I? but they are not written —ten will do."

The footman closed the door, and left the room.

So Mr. Lowe drew his chair closer to the fire, and ten found him with no letters written, and also brought his footman again.—" The letters, sir, if you please."

" Eleven will be time enough, John—I shall just finish this paragraph," said he, " and then I will get them ready."

" Very well, sir," and the door was closed again.

Eleven came—" The letters, sir, if you please."

" Oh! I shall not send them at all to-day—to-morrow will do as well."

It could matter but little to the footman when he went, or whether he went at all, so he left his master again; but before he got down stairs, the bell rang, and up he toiled.

" I shall send you in twenty minutes; have your horse ready."

The man was to be ordered, then re-ordered, then called back; but as he had a famous time of it, and prime wages, he

made it his business to obey; he only just said—"I wish my master *would*——"—Luckily the stable-boy was crossing out of the butler's pantry, so John, in a voice gloriously authoritative, exclaimed—"Boy, have Phillis at the door in twenty minutes exactly—d'ye hear?—in twenty minutes, neither sooner nor later, mind."

Mr. Lowe, as soon as John had left the room, pulled his writing-apparatus towards him, and began his employment.

"Sir, I have searched"——"No, I have *not* searched—there is another damned torment now!"

He rung the bell again—"What's o'clock? my watch stands."

"A quarter past eleven, sir."

"Oh! then I *shall not* send you to-day."

"Very well, sir;" and the man was closing the door.

"Stop—a quarter past eleven you say—no more?"

"Sixteen minutes now, sir."

"Psha!" and Mr. Lowe paused, mend-

ing his pen.—"Have you seen any papers anywhere?" asked he, indolently.

"I, sir? no; only the Evening Mail, and——"

"Not newspapers — parchments, like this."

"No, sir."

"Well, I think I shall send you to the post-office, after all—be ready at twelve.—I suppose I must look for this deed now," said Mr. Lowe, after the man had left the room; "it is cursedly tiresome; I know I shall not find it, so I will write the letter first."

So he began—"Sir, I have rummaged" ——"That word will never do;" so he threw aside that sheet of paper, and began another.

"Sir, in spite of all endeavours"—— "There, I have left out *my*—I find I cannot write to-day—once more I will try, however—

"Sir, the deed of conveyance is not to be found, which I am very sorry for—

very sorry for"——" No, I have no brains for writing to-day—to-morrow will do just as well: it is devilishly cold too, and John *has* been ill."

So Mr. Lowe appeased his conscience, and countermanded the orders he had given of John's going to the post-office.

"No, I wont look for the deed to-day —to-night, perhaps, or early in the morning, or, at the latest, to-morrow afternoon." So he pushed away his pens and ink, and took up the last number of the "Sporting Magazine."

His intimate friend Johnson came in the evening—it was *impossible* to look for the deed then — equally impossible in the morning, for a new double-barrelled gun came, and it also was in the course of nature that he *must* try it. In the afternoon he was too tired; in the evening he *could* not seek for it, for his best dog was ill, and he was obliged to look at the groom poulticing the dog's foot.

The next morning he got up, went to the library, looked down at his feet, and

perceived he had got his wrong boots on. Down he went again, and was changing them, when captain Bellamy's servant came with a note—of course he was obliged to read it, and then he posted off to the breakfast-room, where he had left his sister—"Charlotte, here is an invitation —a select party at captain Bellamy's, at five—shall we go?"

"I have no objection," said Charlotte; "yes."

"Well then, just say three words, merely we will go; I am engaged now, else I would."

Charlotte sat down, Mr. Lowe looking at her all the time, and keeping up a conversation on captain Bellamy's mares and dogs, till she had finished the note, not without thinking (indolent as he was) that he might just as well have written it himself.

"Well, I am going though," but he never stirred—"well, come, I must be off," and he drew up his boots lazily.—"Oh! I wonder whether Johnson will be here to-day? Johnson does not think Juno

will live—by-the-bye, I must *just* go and see how she is."

So off he went—heard the poor animal had been in a great deal of pain the whole night. There was Wilson, a famous dog-doctor—it would not take him long to ride to Wilson's, and Phillis was ordered to be saddled immediately.

"There will be time enough to hunt for the deed this afternoon, before I go to Bellamy's," thought Mr. Lowe; so he drew on his coat, mounted Phillis, and *banged* off.

Wilson was at home, luckily, so Mr. Lowe engaged him to *farry* his dog Juno. He absolutely turned about Phillis, and was coming home, when he thought he would *just* get a lash to his whip. This delay occasioned one of Wilson's everlasting stories to be told, all about three game puppies belonging to captain Bellamy, who had exactly the same disease in their feet Juno had; and then, of course, Wilson, for his own credit, would not omit how he sat

up with one of them forty-eight hours, and watched the effect the medicine he gave them had on them. So Mr. Lowe, with deep interest, listened how the dogs grew better, then worse, then bad again, and at last recovered.

Actually Phillis was turned for homeward, when Mr. Lowe remembered he had a bay colt training, and it would not take five minutes *just* to have a peep at him.

So Wilson was off again, as he walked to the stable, on one of his Canterbury tales of major Topham's black blood colt, just such another as that he was training for Mr. Lowe, excepting the colour; and how major Topham's colt was engaged to run against the best horse in the kingdom, lord Ryder's Phœbe; then he related how the boys who rode were dieted, and sweated, and publicly weighed, till there was not a single ounce difference between them; and how, on the day of the race, the major's blood colt proved restive in the course the first heat, and, to the amazement and

dismay of the spectators and bettors, died.

There was some interest in this story, so Mr. Lowe made Phillis stand still, and the narrator stood still too, and the tale went on—"The horse died, and the groom lost his place; but what is every body's business is nobody's business; whether the major found out there was foul play, nobody knew; but the major lost a thousand guineas, and his colt into the bargain—a fine creature it was, sir, as any man could wish to see, got out of lord Shellon's mare, Lucy, by colonel Dalby's Mercury."

"Well, I *must* be off," said Mr. Lowe; "I cannot look at the colt to-day; it is one o'clock now—it looks like rain too."

"There will be no rain, sir."

"Rain—I do not much care for the rain."

There was a slight pause, and Phillis was turned for home once more.

"Oh, sir! have you heard?"

"Heard what?"

"That sir Harry Midton's bitch beat

captain Bellamy's white dog Blucher, the last coursing match."

"No."

Wilson, who was an everlasting gossip, went through the whole course—the bets, the losses, the stops; interlarding them with various swearing embellishments, and field technical terms; and at two o'clock Mr. Lowe found himself not searching for the deed, not writing to his solicitor, but seeing his bay filly leap, rear-up, canter, gallop, trot, and perform all the evolutions of a fine thorough-bred colt.

"But I *must* be going, 'pon my soul!" said he; "it is half-past three; but if I ride hard, I shall have time for what I want to do at home—good-day, Wilson!"

Phillis dashed off, and Mr. Lowe was actually in sight of his own house—he had seriously cleared the gate, when he met the upper gardener.—"I was going to ask you, sir——"

"I cannot stop now," interrupted Mr. Lowe.

"Sir, you told me yesterday I should know about the young trees, and I am rather at a stand, sir."

"Well, I suppose it wont take me five minutes—I want them to be planted just round the corner of the park paling there, to the left—do not you understand?"

The man did not seem *exactly* to understand.

"I can *just* ride and shew you—it wont take me more than ten minutes."

These ten minutes were an hour; then there was just time to dress, and be off to captain Bellamy's; so the deed of conveyance was still *un*found.

Captain Bellamy's dinner-party was like most other dinner-parties—the gentlemen did not begin to enjoy themselves till the ladies were gone; then came dissertations on dogs, mares, and politics, *and* women.

"Damme! I wish Croker had been here," said captain Bellamy, when the effervescence of their conversation had a little subsided—"Croker is the life of us all:

poor as the devil, to be sure—the best laugher and mimic in England."

At that very moment Mr. Croker was announced.

"Come, Croker; damme! we want you to set us off: too late for dinner—well, never mind, make up with wine."

"I am sorry I——"

"Oh, damme! do not be sorry—come, make us laugh."

It happened Croker that afternoon was not at all in spirits; however, Bellamy's commands were absolute, and he was aware what he was invited for, which was to amuse the company; but he was a "poor devil," and was one of those of whom people said—"Oh! invite Croker; he will keep us alive—there is a place vacant at the side-table—and *takes off* to the life."

We know of no state more painful than dependance—a dependance where the person is too genteel, or rather *fancies* himself too genteel, to do any thing—"*Dependance, heavy are thy chains!*" Croker was a poor curate; he had no *occasion*

to be a mimic—no *occasion* to be at the call of any man living; *but* mingling with the grand had made him have a relish for their society; and then there might be something gratifying in setting the table in a roar.—But to return to captain Bellamy's dinner-party.

At the suggestion of his host, Croker prepared to *entertain*. The first were appropriate laughs—there was the fat reverend doctor Panton, with a snuffle, and his eyes nearly hidden by his cheeks, and a hypocritical expression of countenance no one could resist laughing at; and the dinner-party were convulsed.

"Go on—go on!" said captain Bellamy, as well as he could speak, and Croker obeyed.

Next was the laugh of squire Hoxton, beginning in C alt, and ending in C bass, with sundry *con*tortions and *dis*tortions, such as opening his mouth, rolling his eyes, and sticking his hands in his unbuttoned waistcoat. Then Croker passed on to major Forster, who always began to laugh

when half-tipsey by a sort of facetious grin —when *forward*, with a consequential important cavalier smile—and when *gone*, with an idiot laugh; all this Croker performed admirably.

"Famous, by G—!" said captain Bellamy.

"Capital!" exclaimed Lowe.

"Devilish good, 'pon my soul!" said another.

Croker took a glass of madeira, and was off again—"Here's lady Harriet Beryll, and her laughs." So he began by a gentle smile, accompanied with suitable conversation; then he went on to a laugh of flirtation—then an approving laugh—then a laugh of triumph—then a laugh of defiance—then one of self-commendation—and——But nobody laughed. Croker paused, then went on with redoubled spirit—still no laughter.

"Mr. Beryll, pass the bottle," said captain Bellamy, and Croker had like to have fallen off his chair with surprise. He stammered and hesitated—looked again—

sure as fate, half behind Mr. Lowe's chair sat a nephew of her ladyship's—a dull, phlegmatic fellow, to be sure. Croker hoped he had been dreaming over his glass, for he observed nothing, or rather *seemed* to observe nothing—did not appear either to be conscious of the mimicry; but however, Croker could *not* go on, so he pleaded an engagement out to supper, and retired.

Captain Bellamy, nor, in fact, none of the party assembled, thought *much* that Mr. Beryll had observed Croker, yet still they did not choose to laugh when lady Harriet had been mimicked, *for fear*.

"Croker is a fine fellow!" said captain Bellamy to Mr. Beryll, merely to sound.

"He is a wit," replied Mr. Beryll, indolently.

"Yes—very clever, is not he?"

"Clever—yes;" and Beryll closed his eyes over his glass.

CHAPTER II.

It is impossible for human nature to be perfection, and there are times when the very best of us are frail.

CASTILLY.

MR. Lowe went down to Worcester with his friend Mr. Johnson, and absolutely fell in love with Miss Ferrars, a girl of fortune, went through all the formula of *making* love admirably well, and came back to Piercefield an engaged man.

Miss Ferrars was a superior girl, with a fine open disposition. Whatever were Mr. Lowe's faults, *she* seemed equally attached to him as he was to her; and as he had three thousand a-year, her guardians made no objection to the proposed marriage.

For the first two months after his arrival at home he wrote regularly, and we may say very affectionately: after that,

when he should have written, he always found something to do, some little insignificant thing, which he allowed to employ his time.

Johnson, who was the best friend he had in the world, save and except his sister, saw how he was trifling with Miss Ferrars' happiness and his own too. He remonstrated with him, and Mr. Lowe absolutely wrote a letter of three sides, and was just going to check it, when Johnson, who was in the room, laid his hand on his arm—"Lowe, if you do not love her so well as you thought you did, tell her so, and end the matter at once."

"Oh! yes, I do; only writing letters is a bore," and he laid down his pen—"a complete bore to me."

"I should have thought writing to *that* lady had always been pleasing."

And so Mr. Lowe thought at first; but love has its novelty as well as fashion, or any thing else, and he was one of the most indolent creatures in existence; and if any one has a right to be indolent, surely

it is a young unmarried man, with three thousand a-year, and no one to control him—so Mr. Lowe thought, however.

Mr. Lowe wrote as he spoke, slowly; and positively that employment was altogether a complete fag to him; he settled with Miss Ferrars he would write once a month, and he thought he could manage that very well, without *much* inconvenience.

Mr. Johnson, who had introduced him to Miss Ferrars, his own cousin, felt interested in both their welfares, of course—in fact, he was rather surprised his friend surrendered his heart so soon; but Emma was an attractive girl; and had such an air of frankness withal, and such real sincerity of manner and good sense, that if any one was calculated for his wife, it was her. But then he loved her too well to allow her to be neglected by any one; and much as he esteemed Mr. Lowe, he was aware of his frailties, and he wished him to become a more active man. We all know the Ethiopian cannot change his

complexion; but sometimes human nature is capable of being roused from a lethargic state of indolence. And then Mr. Lowe lost his parents early, and was under the guardianship of his grandfather, sir John, till he became possessed of the Piercefield estate, which occurred a short time before sir John's death; and his cousin, the present sir Henry (who inherited the patrimonial estate of the Lowes), was brought up with him, he also having lost his father at the early age of seven.

Sir John immediately took his two grandsons home to his house, placing the girl under the tuition of a lady calculated "to teach the young idea how to shoot," and so forth; and as he was a man singularly infirm, he neither roused Mr. Lowe's indolent disposition, nor curbed Henry's cunning one. So the boys grew up, giving way to their own wills; for whilst Thomas was laying on the grass doing nothing, but perhaps just looking at the cows feeding, Harry was stoning ducks or geese, and

then contriving that the blame might fall on any one but himself.

Both had the same instructors, and both grew up as different as it was possible for two young men to be. In course of time sir John died, leaving his title, and the family paternal estate, to Harry; but a short time before his death he had *conveyed* to Thomas the Piercefield estate, and a considerable sum of money besides; thus the two cousins were both handsomely provided for.

As it was necessary to make this digression, that our tale might go on with some degree of arrangement, we forbear to make any apology for so doing.

Mr. Lowe dispatched his long letter to Miss Ferrars, and Johnson felt satisfied; and as he was a young barrister just getting into practice, he found himself under the necessity of leaving Piercefield for London. In the spring he hoped to be set to work on his friend's marriage-settlements; and under this impression he took his leave.

The spring came on, and passed over, but Mr. Lowe seemed quite silent on the subject of marriage; and when Johnson was at leisure, he went down to Pierce-field. He found his friend averse to even talking of it, much more entering into it.

"I suppose you are not going to be married at all?" said Johnson, as they were alone together."

"Yes, I am," replied Lowe, in some confusion.

"Not till the summer is over, perhaps?"

"No—but I cannot talk of that now."

Johnson looked at him, and said no more; at last, after a pause of some moments—"You have changed your mind, Lowe?"

"I—no."

"Be candid—you must not *trifle* with Emma."

"I have written tolerably regularly; but come, if you will excuse me, I must go to captain Bellamy's—I promised."

"Excuse you!—oh! yes, certainly; I

have a writing to look over, and I suppose you will be back to dinner, Lowe?"

"Dinner — yes — good-morning!" and away he went.

However, dinner came, but no Mr. Lowe appeared. Charlotte and her aunt came down—"Where is my brother, Mr. Johnson?"

"Gone to captain Bellamy's."

"Oh! to captain Bellamy's?" and Charlotte, by her manner, seemed to say—if he is there, no one knows *when* he will return.

"Gone to captain Bellamy's *again!*" exclaimed Mrs. Hardwick, sighing; "then he will not come back to dinner, *I am* sure."

"Some attraction there, I suppose?" said Johnson, forcing a smile.

Charlotte made no reply, and he could gain but little information from Mrs. Hardwick, who was too busily engaged in the dissection of a chicken to heed his interrogation.

In the first place, Johnson had wondered

why Lowe did not ask him to accompany him to captain Bellamy's, and then again he was unusually close, grave, and silent; and what was still more strange, the very name of Emma Ferrars seemed disagreeable to him; and after arguing the matter well, Johnson thought, as he naturally might, he was in love with somebody else; but then why not break with Emma at once? Of this Johnson was determined, she should *not* be trifled with.

In the evening Mr. Lowe returned, and captain Bellamy with him; and then it was Johnson heard of some beautiful woman, a *countess*, who was staying *at* captain Bellamy's; as for Mr. Lowe, *he* did not extol her, but the captain spoke of her in raptures and ecstacies.

Johnson kept his eyes fixed on Lowe, who, for his part, did not attempt to raise his once. Johnson saw, or rather *thought he* saw, how it was, and he determined to have some private conversation with him on the subject before he left Piercefield; but Lowe seemed apprehensive of this

private conversation, and sedulously avoided all opportunities of its taking place.

"Is this countess a married lady?" asked Johnson.

Captain Bellamy was at that moment disentangling his eyeglass, to look at a new bust of Platoff, which stood on the chimneypiece, and Mr. Lowe was *obliged* to answer—"Yes."

"And young?"

"Yes."

"She is, without exception, one of the best singers I ever heard," interrupted captain Bellamy. "Lowe, you promised you would be with us to-morrow, and then——"

"I thought," interrupted Johnson, "you were going to Worcester, Lowe, to-morrow."

"No; next week will do," said Lowe, "for Worcester."

"Next week *will not* do," thought Johnson.

"Are you *expected* at Worcester, may I ask?"

"Yes; but I have *promised* my friend, captain Bellamy, and I can *just* send a line to let *them* know; and a week will not make much difference."

Johnson made no reply; he felt a strange inclination to see this beautiful countess, and he wished also to see how Lowe behaved to her. He would do nothing in a hurry; he loved Lowe, and he would do nothing rashly to injure him: if the countess had been a single woman, he would have been more apprehensive; but a married woman—it was an hour's fascination, that was all, so Johnson hoped; and, at least, to wait a little could do no material injury.

It happened that a cause in which Johnson was immediately concerned was coming on at the York assizes; of course he was obliged to leave Piercefield as soon as he could, for he that night received a letter from one of the gentlemen concerned, who wished to meet him in town the next day; so he went away, and never saw this beautiful countess at all.

He was in the habit of corresponding with his cousin, Emma Ferrars, and on his arrival in town he saw a letter, in her well-known hand, upon his table; he opened it—it was written in an animated style, as she always wrote; she asked him whether his friend, Mr. Lowe, was ill, as she had received no answer to her last letter; as to supposing him *faithless*, that was totally out of the question; she begged he would let her know, for really, joking apart, she began to be seriously concerned. She knew, she said, every one had their faults, and Lowe was no paragon; but she knew she should be happier with him than any one else, or she would not have accepted him.

Johnson had no time to answer this letter, for he was obliged to dash down to York; and then he was so immersed in law, he scarcely knew which way to turn himself.

Mr. Lowe, meantime, was a constant visitor at captain Bellamy's; the beautiful countess was staying there, and he began

to be pleased, very highly pleased, to be in her society; he was never dull a moment: he loved singing—*she* sung beautifully; he liked to accompany her on horseback—and she sat a horse famously, and went over every thing.

This beautiful woman was just calculated to fascinate; she had all that ready flow of attractive conversation, so delightful to men; and then her voice was one of the most melodious in the world; her eyes were large and dark, and she understood the whole management of them; besides, she fixed on Lowe as her *prey*.

Count Cestini, her husband, was in Italy with his father, who was dying, and had left his countess at her half-sister's, Mrs. Bellamy's, till his return.

Certain it is, the countess wished for admirers—lovers might be too harsh a term. Lowe was handsome, and there was no one else at Piercefield worth looking at: and then there was a good deal of character in him.

"When do you write to Emma Ferrars?" asked Charlotte, one morning, as Mrs. Hardwick left the room.

Lowe coloured.—"Oh, I do not know; I was thinking about it to-day. In the afternoon, *if* I have time. Why did you ask?"

"I had a message to send."

"Well, I shall; that is, I *will* write this afternoon, for I shall be at leisure."

In the afternoon the countess came down to Piercefield with captain and Mrs. Bellamy; of course writing was impossible: but to appease his conscience, he *determined* to send a long letter the next morning, for he was already two in Emma's debt.

"Lowe, you will be with us to-morrow, for a ride to Merton?" said Bellamy.

"Thank you—no," said Lowe, reluctantly.

"Yes, yes—but you will."

"No; really I am engaged."

"Engaged! Damme, *that* will not do!

Evelyn, here is Lowe will not ride with us."

The countess at that moment thought fit to say she was going to town for a fortnight; and Charlotte Lowe felt heartily glad of it.

"Come now, Lowe, do not refuse; Evelyn is going to leave us—do not refuse."

"Yes."

"No, damme, I will not hear a refusal; we will call you at eleven.

"Ah," thought Lowe, "I can get a letter off to Emma before that time. Well then," he said, "I will come."

The countess gave him one of *her* smiles, and they soon after separated.

The next morning Mr. Lowe went to his writing-desk, and as he was unlocking it, he thought the lock went badly; it would not take five minutes *just* to have it oiled; and that office was performed, when he imagined he would try some of Oaxham's patent pens; they were in a scrutoire in the library; just then the

keys were not to be found anywhere; and after he had spent nearly half-an-hour in the search, breakfast was ready, and no letter was even begun—much more written.

After breakfast, a gentleman called, and detained him till half past nine; *then* there was an hour and a half; but just as he had begun, Wilson brought home the bay colt, and it stood to reason he should go down and see it; so eleven came, and no letter was finished.

CHAPTER III.

Letter from Mr. Johnson to Miss Ferrars.

"ASKING me now for all that has happened to me since we met, my history is, like every other young lawyer, short and bitter—a good deal of law, my dear cousin, and very few fees: I *hear* of them; but as to touching many, it is out of the question.

"Seriously, I go on as well as I can expect; and as we generally expect a good deal, this *is* saying something: I am poor; but *one day* (and that 'one day' is a sad deceiver) I hope to be more known, more employed, and consequently better paid.

"I think you knew Croker; his father was a Worcester man: I have heard him (Croker) preach, and *afterwards* saw him mimic. By-the-bye, I must relate a story

about this. Not long ago he was at a captain Bellamy's, where he made the 'table in a roar' by his mimicry. You have heard me mention lady Harriett Beryll, a woman singular for her affectation. Well, a nephew of hers was present during the time he was taking her off; lady Harriett had the gift of the living of Overton; Croker solicited her for it, but the stupid nephew, who had seen the whole mimicry from beginning to end, said a few little disagreeable words, which lost Croker the living, and so he must still starve on his curacies. Thus I think you will agree with me, that mimicry is a despicable talent, and does the possessor eventually a great deal of harm.

"Mr. Lowe is perfectly well; I saw him in town a few days since. As to his being faithless, I cannot say a word on that, as his letters and manners to you must be the best criterion. Besides, I feel a repugnance as to meddling with these affairs—I mean love affairs.

"I think Lowe a principled man, but

too much led away by trifles; yet you are aware I esteem him much. The opinion you wished me to express, I *must* decline, and you will see the propriety of this.

"You ask for news; I know no more of what is passing in London, than as if I were at St. Petersburgh; law, law, is all I see; I should have no objection to a few more briefs indeed.

"However, as Leslie told me the other day, *I get on*, and that is a grand satisfaction; and I do not mind a little fag, when it is attended by honour and credit; I was going to say *fame*, but I remembered I must wait some years before I may even *think* of that word.

"And so believe me,

"Yours truly,

"*Temple.* "M. JOHNSON.

"P. S. Best compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Barthop."

Miss Ferrars read her cousin's letter with great interest, but particularly that part which allnded to her lover. This was all natural enough; she had been expecting a letter anxiously for a whole month; certainly *she* never intended to write again, for Mr. Lowe was well, and in London; and then Johnson seemed to infer she *ought* to judge for herself—and so she ought; she would read over his last epistle. It was colder than usual, and very short—only two sides; and there was an air of *forced* affection, she thought; no, she would never write again, positively.

This resolution might be made in the passion of the moment; but then there were so many circumstances to excite that passion. In the first place, Mr. Lowe had promised to go to her birthday ball: the ball had been given, and she had expected him, but he never wrote, nor offered the least apology. Emma was too high-spirited to bear neglect from any one, and she

made up her mind to forget Lowe as quick as possible.

A fortnight passed away, still no letter. Emma scorned to be melancholy, or at least to appear so, whatever she felt; and pride assists the human heart wonderfully. At last a letter came; Emma opened it quite calmly, and in the very face of Mr. Barthop and his wife; it ran as follows:—

"All that I could, I could not come as I promised; the 'fates conspired,' as you say. The fact was, my sister was very ill, and I did not wish to leave her on any account. Why do not you like Johnson? he is one of the best fellows in the world. The lock of hair you sent me, what must I say for it? a common 'thank you' would not be enough: till we meet then ——*I* am engaged; as you remark, it is *too true*——"

Emma laid down the letter, aware it was not for her. She was extremely pale, but yet quite calm; she merely took a sheet of paper, and without reading the

rest of the epistle, enclosed it back to Mr. Lowe, with the following words:—

"With this you will receive all the presents I ever had from you. You are free, from this moment, from all engagements with,

"Yours, &c.

"EMMA FERRARS."

Tears—no, she would not give one to him—he was unworthy of them. No, he might go; but from that time his welfare was indifferent to her, at least she imagined so. She forgave him all that had passed, and wished him no ill whatever; this is saying a great deal, when you part from a lover in anger.

Mr. Barthop was acquainted with the whole affair, and Emma in reality recovered her spirits; and, in compliance with her guardian's wishes, was to spend the ensuing winter in town.

During the time this was passing, Mr. Lowe had discovered his egregious mistake, of Miss Ferrars receiving the letter he intended for the countess; nothing could be either said or written; so the matter rested in total silence.

The countess was at captain Bellamy's again, and Lowe seemed absolutely enchanted with her—more so than ever. She had drawn him into a *Platonic correspondence*, for the count and herself did not altogether live very happily together, and there was a wide field for discussion, complaint, and so forth: and then it was so delightful to have Mr. Lowe in chains, and to have so handsome a *cecisbeo;* and it made her prudish sister Bellamy so mad.

Lowe was roused from his lethargic state of indolence; there were always little notes to be written to the countess—and then there was to attend her in her rides, and walks, and to listen to her when she sung.

At last came Johnson, once more to try

what could be said or done to prevent his friend's ruination.—"Lowe, I want to speak to you," he said, as they were in the breakfast-room together, after some common conversation had passed.

"Speak to me!" said Lowe, in some confusion.

"Yes. The countess Cestini is a married woman."

"I know it."

"Lowe, you know I am your friend; I love you—will you hear me?" said Johnson.

"Hear you! yes. I know what *you* think; but you are mistaken."

"What I think is, that you are in love with the countess."

"You are mistaken," repeated Lowe, somewhat firmer.

"No, I am not. You cannot deceive me; nor do I think you intend it; but you are deceiving yourself."

"Deceiving myself! No, no, Johnson."

"You are not happy but in her society;

you feel at a loss when away from her; in fact, if you do not rouse yourself, you will discover——"

"I shall never discover I am in love with her."

"Yes, you will. Lowe, we have been friends from our very boyhood; I know your heart as well as you know it yourself; *do* hear me; it is the last request I will ever trouble you with, if I find it disagreeable to you."

"Disagreeable! No, not disagreeable, Johnson; but I am not in love, at least with the countess."

"You are in love with no one else," said Johnson.

"Oh, *you* do not know."

"You can care nothing for Emma, that is quite impossible."

Lowe was silent.

"You trifled with her happiness, and now you are trifling with your own."

"Perhaps I trifled with them both at the same time."

"For your own sake, see no more of

this countess. If she was as beautiful as heaven, *you* must not think of her—— Honour."

"Do not talk of honour—do not talk of *her*. You write sometimes to Emma —how is she?"

"Well."

"Does she ever speak of me?"

"Never."

And Lowe sighed heavily.

"Promise me you will not go to captain Bellamy's for a month, and I shall have some hopes."

"A month!"

"Well then, a fortnight."

"I promise. The countess is nothing to *me*; she is a beautiful creature, but—"

"And you are fascinated: let your own good sense prompt you not to see her any more."

"And so Emma never mentions me?" said Lowe, after a painful pause.

"No."

"She writes to you often?"

"She has lately."

"I behaved very ill to her—very ill."

"And did not the countess occasion that, Lowe?"

"Yes; but, 'pon my soul, I could not help it. You know she was always writing to me; and, to be sure, I was as ridiculous as she. But come, I promise you I will not go for a fortnight."

"Keep your promise," said Johnson.

"Emma will never have me now," continued Lowe.

"I do not think she ever will," said Johnson, firmly.

"She *is* engaged then?" said Lowe, in a quick apprehensive tone.

"Not *decidedly* engaged."

And Lowe, with some pain, saw a kind of happiness in Johnson's features.—"Well, this beautiful countess—do not talk to me any more of her. Now for our ride."

"One more word, and then."

"Well, one more word, and what?"

"This one word is, you have promised me not to go to captain Bellamy's for a

fortnight; there will be notes from the countess, and persuasions from Bellamy, and fishing-parties, and music-parties, and dinner-parties."

"Well, when I say I do not mean to go, I *do not* mean to go. Trust to me; I know I am a lazy fellow, but I *will* try and do right."

"Do, my dear fellow," said Johnson, shaking his hand warmly, and the young men went out for their ride.

In the afternoon, captain Bellamy's servant brought a note to request the honour of Mr. Lowe's and Mr. Johnson's company. Lowe refused it immediately; this was one effort towards doing right, but it was a small one; nevertheless, as it veered that way, it was all very well.

The next morning Johnson was off to town, and Lowe was left to himself. The countess rode down to the Hall, and as she passed down the sweep, she met him just going out.—"Come, you must return," she said, playfully; "I have worlds to tell you of."

Lowe looked at her, and then said the words—"Business of moment," and that he must be going.

"Come, let pleasure then predominate for once."

"Pleasure has predominated too long," thought Lowe, and he kept irresolutely looking at his stirrups, and walking his horse slow; "no, I must go."

"You must *stay*," said the countess, cathing his bridle, half in earnest half in jest.

"No, I must go;" but Mr. Lowe remained where he was.

"Why, you will not be so cruel.—'*Oh, you gay and arch deceiver*."

"You will have the groom hear you," said Mr. Lowe, stopping his horse. "Do not sing."

"Why, I am not in a very singing humour, indeed," replied the countess, putting up her veil; "I am going to leave the Lodge—captain Bellamy's, I mean: my husband is coming over, and I must meet him in town."

Lowe felt that if he had been blessed with a wife, he should not have been much gratified if she had spoken so carelessly of him as the countess did of her husband; and then she seemed to express, or rather to infer, more sorrow than pleasure at the prospect of seeing him.

"But come, you *will* return, I see; or, no—if you will *promise* to come in the afternoon, I will release you this morning, Mr. Lowe."

"I am unable to do myself the pleasure," and Mr. Lowe thought he did wonders in being so firm.

"So you will not come," said the countess, with a fascinating smile; "so you will not come, though it is so near my departure."

"I *cannot*," and Lowe turned his horse to accompany the countess to the hall-door, "else I would."

"But where are you going to ride?"

"To the Grove."

"Well, I will go too, then."

"Will not you go in and speak to Charlotte?" said Lowe.

"Yes, if you will wait for me; and you shall not refuse me that; I will not be five minutes."

Lowe's conscience twinged him; but such was the manner of the countess he could not get off, and he waited for her. He thought he would leave a message with the servant, to say he had forgotten that he was obliged to be at the Grove at eleven, and dare not wait any longer, for a gentleman was to be there at that hour. —"Give my compliments——"

The hall-door opened, but it was only Mrs. Hardwick going after her flowers.

"James, give my compliments to the countess Cestini, and I am *obliged* to be at the Grove at eleven. Lead the horses about," and he absolutely rode off. He gained the gate leading up to the sweep, then he looked back—then he crossed the park, looked back again—no countess made her appearance; then he galloped into the high road, and was safe.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE whole days passed away, and Mr. Lowe had not been at captain Bellamy's. The countess was to leave Piercefield on the fourth, at least so she told Lowe; but the fourth passed over, and he did not go. To be sure, he had some idea of seeing her in London, for he knew lord Harrington well, and she was to be there a week, during which time she had, by dint of manœuvres, extorted a promise that he would call—*only* call upon her.

Lowe, under the spell of irresolution, had allowed himself to give this promise; and only those who have a beautiful artful woman to contend with know what it is to resist so much captivation, particularly *such* a woman as the countess Cestini; because she was penetrating, and saw how she must act to gain the heart of Mr.

Lowe, she let him imagine she was much attached to *him*, while, in fact, she cared nothing for him; at least so little, that another man, handsomer than himself, would effectually make her conduct to him be utterly changed.

Poor Lowe, whose mental faculties were somewhat like his bodily ones, had never been accustomed to exert himself; he struggled to get free from the fascinations of the countess; and then her notes were written to him with so much feeling—she regretted causing *him* any unhappiness or pain; this was so generous, so noble: but still she was a married woman, and had no right to ever have *admitted* a Platonic correspondence. But Lowe, who had good natural sense, thought, if she acted so as count Cestini's wife, might she not be equally liable to do so if fate should ever unite *them?* Certainly. Yes. Then he remarked how differently Charlotte conducted herself; and she was handsome and admired: and Emma again——But that was a galling thought.

Now when a man is not too deep in love, or rather not too much fascinated to be incapable of reasoning with himself, there are some hopes. He would frame some excuse, and not go to town *till* count Cestini came over; *then* there was no danger, for Lowe was aware "human nature was but—human nature," and it would be best to keep away; he absolutely burnt the lock of fair hair, and all the countess's letters, and wrote to say he must now decline corresponding; he went on bravely, and could he, without betraying confidence, have told Johnson, he would.

Important affairs called Mr. Lowe to town,—affairs which could not be put off. Unfortunately the countess came full upon him in the crush-room of the opera-house; he looked round in hopes of being able to recede, but it was impossible, and in half a moment he found her arm through his, and he on his way to lord Harrington's box. Johnson was not with him, nor did he intend visiting the opera that evening, as he was gone out to a dinner-party.

The countess was looking very handsome; she was also excessively dressed; and Lowe felt a momentary pride in being the attendant on such a general object of observation. Glasses were levelled at lord Harrington's box by dozens; and the countess, who sat on a front seat, bore all this admiration uncommonly well; as for lady Harrington, she was totally occupied by the appearance of her eldest daughter, who had been *out* only four evenings, to heed either Mr. Lowe or his companion.

"How happy every body looks!" said the countess, sighing; "every body *is* so but me, I *do* believe."

"And you will be happy in a few days," said her companion, in a low tone of voice.

"I!" and the countess sighed—"I!—you are mistaken; you allude to the count's ——will you never be convinced?" and she hesitated.

Lowe made no effort to conclude the sentence whatever.

"So your engagement with Miss Fer-

rars—Ferrars, yes, that *is* the name—*is* at an end—was she handsome?"

"Not the least so," and Lowe relapsed into silence—grave silence.

The countess had a copy of the opera before her; and as she turned over the leaves, she pointed out such passages to Lowe as were adapted to her own situation, at least what she thought Mr. Lowe imagined her situation to be; there were parts allusive to love, and its disappointments—to hope, and to those who had none.

Mr. Lowe chose to be very attentive to the new actress on the stage, so attentive, the countess was obliged to invoke his attention, by laying her hand on his arm —"There is your friend, Mr. Johnson—do not you see him?"

"Who?" said Lowe, colouring.

"Mr. Johnson; he is sitting with——oh! I do not know her—I thought I had—just lend me your glass one moment."

"I know her," said Lowe, feeling ra-

ther agitated—"it is Miss Ferrars;" and he turned his head away.

"Miss Ferrars, is it? But come now, just read this Italian to me."

Lowe read it, but without knowing a syllable what he said; he fixed his eyes on Emma, and then on her companion, by turns, till the curtain fell, and then the countess engaged him in endeavouring to translate some lines of French; then lady Harrington begged hard for his company to supper, and the countess pleaded with her fine eyes.

"No," Lowe was resolved.

"The last evening I may *ever* have an opportunity of——"

No matter—Lowe was resolved; he handed the countess into the carriage, then lady Harrington, then her daughter.

"Now, you get in yourself."

"No, thank you; I am off to a friend."

"You will call—Wednesday, at farthest," said the countess, drawing up the glass.

"Thank you—my time is——"

"Oh! yes, you will call;" the carriage-door was closed, and off they went.

"Thank God!" thought Lowe, "I am getting over my folly. I see she is not a woman to *my* taste. Emma is Johnson's, I see. I will call though, and convince her I am proof against all her charms *now*. What the devil could I be thinking about at Piercefield! But it is done now, and what is worse, cannot be undone."

Lowe had been to the opera to kill time—Johnson to oblige an intimate friend of his—the countess to shew her beauty—and Emma in hopes of enjoying herself.

Lowe had no occasion to be *killing time*, for he had that morning been informed by his cousin, sir Henry Lowe, that he had been advised to lay claim to the Piercefield estate—opinions of the first lawyers in England were in his favour; a suit, he said, he had ordered to be commenced, to reinstate him in his property.

There was an opening left for compro-

mise, but that Lowe disdained; two motives might prompt this offer—it might lure Mr. Lowe to make some arrangement which might afterwards appear against him—or sir Henry might have a hope that Lowe, intimidated by the fear of a hazardous and expensive suit, would quietly give up half his estate, to secure the possession of the other.

Lowe brooded over this letter till the afternoon, then he went down to Johnson's rooms, and found him gone to a party at a friend's. He strolled down to the opera-house, and then it occurred to him he would go there; so he returned to his hotel, equipped himself, and the result was as we before stated.

Next morning came the important consultation. Johnson advised Lowe to procure the best counsel, to spare neither pains nor expences, and to put those he entrusted with the case in the full possession of the cause; Johnson regretted he was not of sufficient standing to take the cause in his own hands; Lowe would have

had him; but Johnson was diffident of his own powers and ability; therefore, under that plea, he refused.

The documents he prepared with great care; he went to Piercefield himself, and commenced a search after the lost deed of conveyance. It was a year since Mr. Lowe had missed it; and the last time he ever remembered to have seen it was one day when he was clearing out an old iron chest, filled with copies of leases, and other papers; he also recollected he was called away to go on a water-party, and forgot to put the papers back for nearly a week; and when he did, it was in haste, for it was at the time he went to Bath with his aunt Hardwick, and he did not remember even then seeing the deed of conveyance; but that his solicitor had told him he must commence a thorough search, as such a paper was of infinite importance to his possession of the estate at Piercefield. In compliance with this he had done so, but no deed appeared.

But what puzzled Mr. Lowe and his

friend most was, how sir Henry became apprised that the deed was missing. At last Lowe remembered he was talking over the affair to Brown, his solicitor, when Betton was tying the cord of the window-blinds on; and neither Price nor Lowe knew he was there, till they had discussed the point. In consequence of Betton's riding a fine mare of Mr. Lowe's with her tongue tied with whip-cord, he had discharged him with some degree of resentment, and since that time he had been living with sir Henry Lowe—so this was accounted for.

Proceedings commenced, and from time to time Johnson informed Mr. Lowe how they were likely to terminate; and it was while the cause was passing through the courts, that Mr. Lowe intended to break all communication with the beautiful countess for ever. In the first place, his better reason convinced him that an attachment to a married woman could only be founded on dishonourable motives; for true love must be founded on esteem, and

a knowledge of good qualities. Besides, the countess, though a woman of *ton*, had too much forwardness in her manners—too much passion (if we may be allowed the term). It might be gratifying to think he was capable of engaging the affections of one so beautiful; but it could be only a momentary gratification; and then what was the use of such a gratification? if it terminated in any thing, it could only be dishonour; and he felt he had struggled himself *almost* free from her chains—at least he fancied so.

Under this impression, and conscious of his heart being every hour more free from the blandishments of the countess, he went to lord Harrington's, for a call. He found the family out; but a note was delivered him, requesting his company in the evening—it was from the countess; it was written with her usual powers of brilliancy; and he, overcome by the irresolution of the moment, left a verbal message to say he would comply with her wishes.

He was crossing the street on his return

to his hotel, when a neat carriage passed him, and a lady drew up the glass; as she did so, he recognized the features of Miss Ferrars. The impulse of the moment prompted him to bow—he did so—and she acknowledged it immediately.

He felt glad even at this slight token, and dined in tolerable spirits. Johnson gave him some good account of his cause; and Charlotte and Mrs. Hardwick had written to say *they* were prepared for the worst, and should be content any where. It would be so delightful to surprise them with the intelligence that he had gained the suit; and Charlotte, he knew, would be so happy to see the countess was nothing to him more than a common acquaintance.

Well, in the evening to lord Harrington's he went; the countess was at home, and alone; this Lowe did not altogether wish; but the greater the trial, the more merit in bearing it—so he thought, and he was ushered in.

The countess did not at first perceive him, or at least she did not choose to perceive him; she was then leaning on her harp, merely for effect, and when Mr. Lowe spoke, she affected surprise.

"Did you not hear me announced?" he asked, dryly.

"I heard nothing—I am wretched—my husband comes home to-morrow," she said, impetuously.

"Indeed! he has been gone long."

"Long! to *me* the time has appeared *very* short."

Lowe remained silent, though the countess heaved a deep sigh. He saw before him a beautiful woman, in all the pride of loveliness, dressed to the greatest advantage, mistress of a hundred captivations—he saw her apparently feeling the greatest agony of mind possible to conceive in parting from him.

"Our correspondence must terminate," said Lowe; "I regret that I ever began it," and he felt for the countess as he spoke.

"You cannot regret it more than I do, because it gives you such pain."

"Do not think a moment of *my* pain. I own I have been very wrong. The only pain I feel *is*, that I am occasioning you unhappiness; at least I was afraid, and am afraid, that I had given you reason to suppose that I——in fact, I cannot express myself. I have all along been highly to blame—my manners to you have been unwarrantable. Thank God! as yet they have not been dishonourable."

"*This*—all this from the indolent Mr. Lowe!" thought the countess; "why, I never guessed the man had so *much* in him before."

"I know *I* have in a manner injured your husband; at least this I know—if any one had acted by my wife as I have by you, I should be seriously unhappy."

"You mistake," said the countess, in a tone of self-reproach—"you mistake—it is I who have occasioned all; and if there can be one person in the world who is entirely divested of hope or of happiness,

it is the woman, Mr. Lowe, who stands before you."

"Since we are aware of our error," said Lowe, with wonderful resolution, "since we see and know what has passed was not right, let us meet no more, or as little as possible; for though we may not feel any other sentiment for each other but friendship, the world——"

"Who talks of the world?" said the countess, losing all the softness of manner she had assumed; "*you* cannot—you who have been my partner in error, and——"

"I talk of error, and of the world," said Lowe, in a tone of firmness; "and I will tell you, we have set the world too much at defiance; we must repair that—*that* was our error."

"Lowe talking philosophy!" exclaimed the countess, forgetting, in the passion of the moment, that to *him* she must *not* be sarcastic, at least if she meant to retain him in chains.

"Yes, I may be talking philosophy, but I hope I am talking reasonably."

"Well, then, let me hear some reason —reason borrowed from your friend, Mr. Johnson."

"No, from experience, and dear-bought experience too," said Lowe, feeling angry his friend's name should be called in question; "I have been acting the part of a madman."

"And I of a madwoman," said the countess, with a scornful laugh; "I know I have been mad—nay worse, I have been reasonably mad, which is folly indeed. *You* have recovered your reason—I can account for that; you have seen Miss Ferrars—you feel your affection returning for her, and you wish to break with me."

"The affection I felt for Miss Ferrars, and *still* feel, is, and was, far different to what I felt for you."

"Oh! I am aware of that," replied the countess, with another scornful laugh.

"And as to breaking with you," pursued Lowe, "the friendship you professed for me ought never to have interfered with my regard for Miss Ferrars; I feared

it was the same only for another passion. Madam, you must see, you must know, why I wish to separate myself from you. It is not that I am fearful of my own resolution, but——"

"Of mine, perhaps?" rejoined the countess, quickly.

"Well then, of yours."

The countess felt uncommonly inclined to laugh—"So then we are to part?—well, come, not in anger then."

"Oh! no, not in anger."

"Part for ever! there is something ugly in the word. Suppose we have music. I must give you one air before we part for ever, Lowe."

Lowe felt a little affected at this apparent bitter gaiety, and awaited the song in silence.—"The worst is over," he kept saying to himself; "and if Emma Ferrars *could* know, surely she *might* forgive."

The countess's figure was exactly calculated for a harp; her arms were finely turned, and her waist taper and elegant. She seemed conscious of the power of her

charms, and hoped—yes, hoped, Lowe would fall a sacrifice, though she did not love him. This may appear inconsistent, but so it was. It was mere passion she felt for him—the caprice of an hour, which perhaps to-morrow would find entirely withered away.

Lowe stood by the harp as she sang, and the following was the air she chose.

* In the garden of love the roses are fair,
For zephyrs all sweet are wafting them there—
In the garden of love the flowers are bright,
As the ray of the moon in the pale midnight—

In the garden of love the roses are dying,
The flowers are fading, the zephyrs are flying;
And love is itself a vision like death,
Which withers away like the whirlwind's breath.

The countess had exerted every nerve and every power, but Lowe bore it all like a man. Music, or melody, has great sway on the human heart—such sway, that it cannot be described.

Lowe rose to go, and the countess made a strong effort to detain him.

* From the Spanish.

"I promised——"

"You have promised me a thousand things, and forfeited them all."

"Yes, but I am reasonable now."

"Well, *friends*—we are good *friends*, I hope."

"Yes, nothing more," and he laid a peculiar emphasis on those words, "nothing more."

"But you are not going so soon—lady Harrington will not be home these two hours, and I did not accompany her, on purpose that I might converse with you. To-morrow—remember my husband comes to-morrow."

"I do remember it, but I *must* go."

"You shall not go—as a *friend* I will detain you," interrupted the countess.

"I, as your best friend, must go—you must see the propriety of it: we have acted wrong from following our own inclinations too much. I am firm—I must go."

"Oh! no—you are *not* firm," said the countess, playfully; "no, stay, stay."

"I must be firm," and Mr. Lowe rose; "Good-night! we are friends, and nothing further."

They shook hands, and he left the room quickly.

Lowe was astonished to find himself in the square; he was absolutely amazed at his own resolution. He was glad at his escape, for, from many reasons, he considered it nothing less. Certain flashes of the countess's eyes, and certain expressions which had escaped her lips, served to convince him that she did not *love* him as a *friend*; so he went home with a light heart to his hotel.

CHAPTER V.

THE next evening Lowe received the intelligence from his friend Johnson, that the cause of the Piercefield estate was given against him. It had gone through the courts with greater expedition than common, and the result was favourable to the heir-at-law, sir Henry. Justice is sometimes outwitted.

It was a delightful morning, and Lowe prepared to leave town for Piercefield, to convey this distressing intelligence. He rode up the sweep, and never did the house, the gardens, or the plantations, appear more beautiful. Mrs. Hardwick and Charlotte were in the drawing-room, expecting him, and with a heavy heart he entered.

"I am prepared for the worst," said Charlotte, going up to him kindly.

"I am glad you are," answered Lowe, in much agitation; "the cause is given against us."

Mrs. Hardwick, for her part, never attempted to utter a syllable.

"Well, we have yet something to depend on."

"What?" exclaimed Lowe; "what have we to depend on, Charlotte?"

"Why, your fortune in the stocks, dear Thomas."

"Do not set your heart on that—sir Henry is determined to pursue me to the greatest extremity. Still be as comfortable as you can; Johnson will be here in a few hours, then I shall be better able to tell you more."

Charlotte was too much agitated to speak, and Lowe left the room.

The arrival of Johnson brought very little hope; Charlotte learned then that the rents her brother had received during the time he had been possessor of the estate, he would have to repay to the heir-at-law. In consideration of the many im-

provements, and so on, and also if Lowe would resign all his plate and furniture without reserve, sir Henry had *said* that he thought them equivalent to his demands; but, on mature consideration, he insisted on full payment; and though his word ought to have bound him as a man of honour, yet in law it could no way stand good—this he was aware of, therefore he directed his solicitor to proceed accordingly for the just debt.

Lowe was astonished and distressed, but there was no redress to be had, and the family all left Piercefield in a postchaise, as quick as possible; all their favourite gardens and rooms—the dear library Charlotte loved so well—all were given up—not without a sigh. They proceeded to town; and as soon as Mr. Lowe arrived there, in consequence of the money he had in the funds being insufficient to defray the debt of the mesne-rents, &c. he was arrested.

Johnson, poor as he was, offered security to the utmost extent of his power; but Lowe refused it, resolved not to in-

volve his friend; then Charlotte had a thousand pounds left her by a great-aunt, which she insisted on his taking; but he was inexorable, and to the King's Bench he was conveyed. There he had choice, sad choice, of the bleak unoccupied apartments; and Charlotte, who would be his companion, formed a plan to amuse the solitary hours of a prison existence. She read to him, worked by him, and, when she saw his mind would bear it, she laughed at former times; as for Mrs. Hardwick, she was at Bath. Johnson, too, often came to the prison, and talked, and brought books, and every comfort he thought would conduce to both their happiness.

Fifty pounds a-year is starvation; but how it was Lowe could not tell, but he never expressed a wish for any delicacy, but what Charlotte purchased it, and her purse seemed generally filled. Was it Johnson who was thus generous? No, Charlotte would not accept it; and from Mrs. Hardwick it could not come, as her

income was very much confined. Charlotte worked, but work could never produce so much. Lowe began to suspect she wrote, because she employed him in mending so many pens; this she had requested him to do several times; but then he could not divine *when* she wrote—all day she was with him, and in the evening nature must want repose.

"How our rich cousin now is glorying in all his wealth!" said Charlotte.

"Glorying! a poor glory, if he considers all," said Lowe.

"Well, we are as happy as he," said Charlotte; "so, never mind. Come, let me read you something entertaining and merry."

"Bless me, Charlotte! what spirits you are in! Well, come, read."

Charlotte began—Lowe listened attentively—Charlotte went on with redoubled spirit, and Lowe seemed wrapt in the tale.

"Well," said Charlotte, as she finished, "*how* do you like it?"

"Oh! very much—very much *indeed*."

"Then," exclaimed she, "I must tell you—I wrote it!"

"You?"

"Yes, I."

"When."

"Of an evening—it was no fatigue to me; and I am to be better paid for the next."

"Better paid—of an evening!—I cannot bear this; ruining your health," said Lowe, half-choked; "and *I* the cause."

"Ruining my health! no, it is a pleasure to me."

"Careless fool that I was! and you wasting your youth in a prison, so different to what you were brought up to!—I *cannot* bear it, indeed."

"Now pray do not say so. Well, I am glad Mr. Johnson is come; and he looks absolutely as if he brought good news, too."

"I have brought a letter for you, Miss Lowe," said Johnson.

"Me! well, come, I must read it; so

go and talk to Thomas, for he is in very bad spirits to-day."

Charlotte went to the small room appropriated for her use, and opened the letter. The hand was unknown to her. It was an offer of marriage, and from young Beryll!—just arrived from the Continent, in consequence of hearing of his aunt's death, had become a man of fortune, and made it his first business to endeavour to secure the hand of so amiable a woman, and so forth.

Charlotte never imagined Mr. Beryll was the least attached to her—women can sometimes discern esteem, even before a man opens his lips to her; but she confessed he had never given her the least reason to suppose he regarded her any more than a common acquaintance. She felt the full generosity of his offer—her brother and herself in a prison—every circumstance conspired to elevate him in her opinion; but yet she did not think she *could* marry him. Yet Beryll would doubtless release her brother from prison—fifteen hundred pounds could

not be much to him, now he was possessed of lady Harriett's fortune, and she then would be the means of giving that brother (whom she loved, with all his faults, even better than herself) *liberty*.

The letter was shewn to Lowe while Johnson was with him. The next morning, when his friend called, he addressed him with—"Johnson, Charlotte *wont* have Beryll, because she wont leave me here; now do *you* tell her I am a great deal more uncomfortable about her being obliged to put up with a prison life, than concerning myself: besides, Beryll has fortune, and I *do* believe he is amiable—a little indolent, or so—but we all have our faults: do you persuade her—go."

"I persuade her!" said Johnson, *flinching* back.

"Yes; here she fags herself to death for my sake; and if she marries Beryll, there is what she has always been brought up to, independence and fortune, and so on."

"Well, but surely you might say all that was sufficient—*I*——"

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CHAPTER V.

THE next evening Lowe received the intelligence from his friend Johnson, that the cause of the Piercefield estate was given against him. It had gone through the courts with greater expedition than common, and the result was favourable to the heir-at-law, sir Henry. Justice is sometimes outwitted.

It was a delightful morning, and Lowe prepared to leave town for Piercefield, to convey this distressing intelligence. He rode up the sweep, and never did the house, the gardens, or the plantations, appear more beautiful. Mrs. Hardwick and Charlotte were in the drawing-room, expecting him, and with a heavy heart he entered.

"I am prepared for the worst," said Charlotte, going up to him kindly.

"I am glad you are," answered Lowe, in much agitation; "the cause is given against us."

Mrs. Hardwick, for her part, never attempted to utter a syllable.

"Well, we have yet something to depend on."

"What?" exclaimed Lowe; "what have we to depend on, Charlotte?"

"Why, your fortune in the stocks, dear Thomas."

"Do not set your heart on that—sir Henry is determined to pursue me to the greatest extremity. Still be as comfortable as you can; Johnson will be here in a few hours, then I shall be better able to tell you more."

Charlotte was too much agitated to speak, and Lowe left the room.

The arrival of Johnson brought very little hope; Charlotte learned then that the rents her brother had received during the time he had been possessor of the estate, he would have to repay to the heir-at-law. In consideration of the many im-

provements, and so on, and also if Lowe would resign all his plate and furniture without reserve, sir Henry had *said* that he thought them equivalent to his demands; but, on mature consideration, he insisted on full payment; and though his word ought to have bound him as a man of honour, yet in law it could no way stand good—this he was aware of, therefore he directed his solicitor to proceed accordingly for the just debt.

Lowe was astonished and distressed, but there was no redress to be had, and the family all left Piercefield in a postchaise, as quick as possible; all their favourite gardens and rooms—the dear library Charlotte loved so well—all were given up—not without a sigh. They proceeded to town; and as soon as Mr. Lowe arrived there, in consequence of the money he had in the funds being insufficient to defray the debt of the mesne-rents, &c. he was arrested.

Johnson, poor as he was, offered security to the utmost extent of his power; but Lowe refused it, resolved not to in-

volve his friend; then Charlotte had a thousand pounds left her by a great-aunt, which she insisted on his taking; but he was inexorable, and to the King's Bench he was conveyed. There he had choice, sad choice, of the bleak unoccupied apartments; and Charlotte, who would be his companion, formed a plan to amuse the solitary hours of a prison existence. She read to him, worked by him, and, when she saw his mind would bear it, she laughed at former times; as for Mrs. Hardwick, she was at Bath. Johnson, too, often came to the prison, and talked, and brought books, and every comfort he thought would conduce to both their happiness.

Fifty pounds a-year is starvation; but how it was Lowe could not tell, but he never expressed a wish for any delicacy, but what Charlotte purchased it, and her purse seemed generally filled. Was it Johnson who was thus generous? No, Charlotte would not accept it; and from Mrs. Hardwick it could not come, as her

income was very much confined. Charlotte worked, but work could never produce so much. Lowe began to suspect she wrote, because she employed him in mending so many pens; this she had requested him to do several times; but then he could not divine *when* she wrote—all day she was with him, and in the evening nature must want repose.

"How our rich cousin now is glorying in all his wealth!" said Charlotte.

"Glorying! a poor glory, if he considers all," said Lowe.

"Well, we are as happy as he," said Charlotte; "so, never mind. Come, let me read you something entertaining and merry."

"Bless me, Charlotte! what spirits you are in! Well, come, read."

Charlotte began—Lowe listened attentively—Charlotte went on with redoubled spirit, and Lowe seemed wrapt in the tale.

"Well," said Charlotte, as she finished, "*how* do you like it?"

"Oh! very much—very much *indeed*."

"Then," exclaimed she, "I must tell you—I wrote it!"

"You?"

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"Of an evening—it was no fatigue to me; and I am to be better paid for the next."

"Better paid—of an evening!—I cannot bear this; ruining your health," said Lowe, half-choked; "and *I* the cause."

"Ruining my health! no, it is a pleasure to me."

"Careless fool that I was! and you wasting your youth in a prison, so different to what you were brought up to!—I *cannot* bear it, indeed."

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"Well, but surely you might say all that was sufficient—*I*——"

"No, you can do it much better than I can; tell her, I am more unhappy to see her here, than she, or you, or any one, can imagine; and then—in fact, you are the only man who can persuade her, I *know*."

"I wish indeed you would mention all this yourself, Lowe; she must think it so strange *I*, of all people in the world, should venture; and, upon second thoughts, I——"

"Well, if you wont oblige me," interrupted Mr. Lowe.

"Yes, if you insist, I will.

"Well then, go *now*, or she will have answered Beryll's letter. Tell her it will make me very happy to see her Mrs. Beryll."

During the time this conversation had been passing, Charlotte had been reflecting on Mr. Beryll's handsome offer. His letter was full of character, just like himself; and he made the proposal so generously; and to be the means of setting her brother at liberty—But then——

Her thoughts were interrupted by the entrance of Johnson, who, after seating himself by her, endeavoured in vain to open the purport of his visit.—"So you are at work again, Miss Lowe?" he said; "always working! surely you must be tired sometimes."

"Tired! oh no!"

"And this place must appear so gloomy to you, and so dull."

"Not quite so gay as Piercefield, perhaps; but come, I wont allow you to be idle—mend me some pens, and we will chat while you are doing them. My brother is writing a letter, so he wont miss you."

Johnson took the pens, and began to mend them, as she requested.—"Your brother has been telling me about your writing—why, really, it is wonderful how you bear it."

"Do not go into heroics, I beseech you."

"Heroics! I am not at all inclined for heroics this morning."

"So it appears. Well, I declare you are very pale—you are *ill*."

"No, I am quite well. Oh! I had almost forgotten my embassy to you—now for it."

"An embassy! well, I think I can guess."

Johnson was obliged to slash through a very awkward quill before he began to expound—"Mr. Beryll——"

"Oh! I thought that *was* the embassy."

"Mr. Beryll has made you an offer—do you mean to accept him?"

"What a silly, ridiculous, absurd question now!"

"Well, but do you?"

"I am *deliberating*," and Charlotte looked earnestly into Johnson's countenance.

"Deliberating, are you?—it will be a good thing," he said, reluctantly.

"A good thing—yes, a very good thing. You would advise me to accept it—would you not?"

"Mr. Beryll has a good fortune."

"You prevaricate; would you not now advise me to marry Mr. Beryll—to set my brother at liberty—to make myself independent, and to——"

"If you love him, certainly," rejoined Johnson, calmly. "It distresses your brother to see you here."

"Well, but then, Mr. Johnson, will you go and give my love to my brother, and tell him I had rather be here all my lifetime, and work—yes, work for both his and my own existence, than marry a man I cannot love; and will you tell him, I know *he* also had rather spend his existence in this prison, than be set free at the expence of his sister's happiness."

Johnson felt overcome—"And I am to tell your brother this?"

"Yes; tell him, too, I am quite happy—tell him, too, he does not know what pleasure it is to me to be capable of writing or working for his comforts. With fifty pounds a-year and my earnings—I do not like the word earnings, though—we can live as happily, nay happier, than the man

who has so unjustly deprived him of his fortune. Go, Mr. Johnson, tell him all this; and if after that he says he wishes me to marry Mr. Beryll, I will *obey* him."

Johnson felt much affected, threw down the pens, and left the room.

"I have been to your brother," he said, on his return; "and from what I have said, he wishes you to act as your heart prompts you."

"Then my heart prompts me to be single. So give me a pen, and I will write to Mr. Beryll directly."

"Remember, Miss Lowe, the gloom, the loneliness of a prison life, secluded from all your friends; and, as your brother says, passing your best days in——"

"I cannot write if you talk," said Charlotte, with a smile; "no, I am resolved; come, this pen is a bad one—give me another pray."

Johnson selected one from those he had been mending, and as she attempted to take it, he caught her hand in his, and,

with a firm voice, he said—"Charlotte, has it never occurred to you that I have loved you passionately for years? I can offer you nothing—time, perhaps, may give me that power; but even if it does, I perhaps may not flatter myself that you will accept me?"

"You may," was all Charlotte could say, for her tears prevented her—"you may indeed."

"But," continued Johnson, turning away, "I will not ask you to bind yourself by any vow, or even promise, to be mine. Let not what I have said be the means of preventing others, whose fortunes are more independent, from coming forward. In the present circumstances I can only offer you a heart and hand—fortune I have none; and I am at the same time aware, as to marrying at this distressing period, it is totally out of the question. I am gratified beyond expression at your feeling to me. You, as well as myself, know fortune is essential, at

least some; nor shall my endeavours be wanting to promote it."

"If to know that I esteem you beyond all is gratifying——"

"Gratifying!" interrupted Johnson; "it is more—it is happiness. Charlotte, I do not flatter; you have some faults, and I, doubtless, many more. But I am happy to be the possessor of so noble a heart—happy to know you prefer me. We must look on the bright side of life; from some circumstances I know, perhaps happy days may not be far distant."

Charlotte inquired of those circumstances, but Johnson, from some motives he could not explain, requested to remain silent on the subject; and Lowe being informed of Johnson's attachment, felt happier than he done for some time past.

CHAPTER VI.

COUNT Cestini and his wife were gone to Naples, to take possession of the inheritance which devolved on the count upon the death of his father—Miss Ferrars was in Worcestershire, attending the deathbed of Mrs. Barthop—Lowe and Charlotte still in the King's Bench prison—and Johnson struggling to get on in the law; not very promising prospects, we own, but so they were.

The road crowded with carriages of every description, and the hurry and bustle through the little town of Epsom, denoted the races were at hand.

Two little boys on ponies were not the least pleased on this occasion; there they were galloping, and rearing up their steeds,

when they were in view of the people assembled, and fancying themselves complete horsemen.

Those who have witnessed the gaiety of a race-ground need no delineation here, and those who have not would be very ill pleased with the description we should give them. These two little boys rode backwards and forwards, whipping their ponies, and then pulling them in, so that they might evince a little *pluck*; and their youth was so great, that the apparent danger they were oftentimes involved in drew many persons' attention. The desire of fame has ruined many; and for any thing we know of, the desire of being thought a good horseman once broke a right honourable's neck.

But to return:—The first heat was over, when a bet was made between two gentlemen, that they would cross the course when the race-horses were within ten yards of them. Now of all things in the world, crossing the course is the most dangerous. Some people have a delight in doing what

the phrase calls *venturesome* actions—this was the case with colonel Kelty and major Hay.

The bets were made, and colonel Kelty's horse was to run, but at that unlucky moment came up these two little boys.

"Do you think you dare ride across the course," said Kelty to the eldest, "when the horses are at that post, which will be about ten yards off you?" for he began to lose the inclination to do it himself.

"No, sir."

"I dare," said the youngest, riding forward.

"And will you?" said Kelty; "I will give you a guinea, my brave little fellow, if you do."

"I do not want the guinea, but I dare do it."

"There is a king for you, Drummond and Hay; here is a bold little fellow will cross the course when the horses are at the second post—what will you bet he will clear it?"

"I will bet ten guineas he wont," said Hay.

"Done! that he will," exclaimed Kelty.

"Done! that he wont," said Hay.

The little boy immediately began to feel of some importance; and though his companion begged him not to do it, he seemed only the more strenuous to shew his prowess—"I tell you I will do it, James."

"Well, if you will, you will," said the eldest of the two; "only *if* you should get thrown down——"

"If the sky fall, we shall catch larks."

And Kelty, Hay, and Drummond, laughed heartily at this remark.

The horses were every moment getting nearer to the second post. The little boy prepared for the race, which was to be begun at a signal of Kelty's. The signal was given—ladies stretched their white necks—the little boy crossed the course in safety, and gained the other side, and Kelty galloped his horse after him, fol-

lowed by Drummond and Hay.—"There, I told you it was to be done."

And so it was done, but the little boy was unable to stop his pony, and as it shyed at a carriage door being opened, he fell from the saddle, and his foot hanging in the stirrup, he was dragged to some distance, before it was in the power of any person on the ground to stop the pony.

Kelty, very much frightened, made all possible speed to him, as did the other little boy with him.—"He is only senseless, my good little fellow—do not distress yourself so," said Kelty, taking hold of the pony's bridle; "we will take every care of him; that little bruise on his head, you see, does not bleed much; and he is not dead, he is *only* senseless."

They conveyed the little boy to the head inn at Epsom, and a surgeon was procured without delay. On examination it proved the little bruise was a fracture on the head, and the senselessness—*death*; and on further inquiry, this little boy

proved to be the only son and heir of sir Henry Lowe of Pierrefield!

He had stolen out without leave, in company with one of his playmates—bribed a servant to let them have his mamma's two chaise ponies; and as sir Henry and lady Lowe were in Paris, he did not much mind setting his tutor for once at defiance.

"I wish," said Lowe one day to Johnson—"I wish I could hear whether Emma Ferrars is married, or likely to be; I thought at one time *you* liked her?"

"No—*she* always was much attached to you, till——"

"Ah! till *I* was fascinated—well?"

"She acknowledged the beauty of the countess Cestini; for, if you remember, she saw her at the opera."

"Oh! yes, *I* remember—so she *is* engaged?"

"Not that I know of."

"She writes to you—does she ever inquire after me *now*?"

"Yes—and I think it is in the very letter I had this morning, she sent some message to you."

Lowe sprung up with wonderful agility from his chair—"A message! well, that is kind."

Lowe read the part in Emma's letter containing the message—it spoke of hopes that he had not entirely forgotten her—of wishes for his liberation; as a *friend* she should always be glad to see him, &c. &c.

"As a friend," said Lowe, in a disappointed tone—"as a *friend*."

"Well, now, what would the man have?" exclaimed Johnson. "Here she says, as plain as can be, she hopes you have not forgotten her, and——"

"But as a *friend*," interrupted Lowe.

"Well, what would you have her say?"

"As a *friend*—why I cannot bear that."

"Well, it is plain——"

"Ay, plain she only esteems me as a *friend*—as a *friend*."

"Do you think now," said Johnson, seriously, "that if she had cared nothing

for you, she would have troubled herself to have even inquired after you, much more sent this kind message? It is evident she regards you still, and that your misfortunes have made no difference in her heart. I wish I could shew you her letter she wrote to me, after she had received mine which informed her you were here. I tell you, Lowe, it is very plain she regards you——"

"As a friend," said Lowe; "well, I do not deserve that. But really I think, if I was restored to my estates again, I should never be the indolent fellow I was—but then, do you think Emma would give me the trial of seeing whether I should be more faithful to her?"

"I cannot tell, indeed; you had better ask her, when such an opportunity offers. I cannot be supposed to know my cousin's heart."

"Ah! you are mocking me."

"Mocking you! God forbid I should, Lowe."

It happened, by the merest chance in

the world, sir Henry Lowe's steward at Piercefield had a small piece of land, about which he determined to go to law; and it also happened, by the same chance, that Johnson was the person to whom he entrusted the case. It was necessary to have conferences together, of course; and as Johnson had to visit Piercefield, he took that opportunity of having a personal interview with the steward.

Mr. Prise was like a great many men, declaring he would go to law with farmer Solkit, if he lost every shilling of his property—viz. he would risk a hundred pounds to get five. Johnson considered the case; and as the steward chanced to be on the right side, at least on the side of justice, Johnson felt some pleasure in being his counsel.

He was in the very library where he had passed so many days with Lowe; the books were there the same as usual, and very possibly, as sir Henry was no reader, had never been touched. Sir Henry was expected from Paris in a fortnight—no

matter, as the poor said, if he never came at all, for the good he did amongst them. A man more universally disliked there could not be. Poor Lowe, with all his foolish indolencies, was a good landlord, a good master, and a good man. Sir Henry had screwed his Piercefield tenants up enough, of all conscience, and out of all conscience too. But Johnson was in the library, and we were allowing ourselves to write of a man who really did not deserve a pen, nor even the mark of a pen, to be wasted upon him.

As soon as the conference was over, and Johnson had been invested with all the necessary, &c. &c. for the steward's law-suit, he prepared to leave.

"You knew this house in Mr. Lowe's time," said Mr. Prise.

"Oh! yes—there is the drawing-room, there is the dining-room."

"Yes, sir."

The man opened the door, and sure enough there was the piano—the very paintings Lowe set such a store by; the

same carpets, chairs, and, in fact, the same furniture altogether.

"Who knows but he may have it again?" said Mr. Prise.

"Who?"

"The right—I mean Mr. Lowe who is in prison."

"Why, what makes you think so, Mr. Prise?"

"Sir Henry is ill; in that case, as poor young sir Harry was killed——"

"Oh! yes, I comprehend—he, Mr. Lowe, is the heir, and nothing can set that aside. Sir Henry is very ill then?"

"Yes, sir, too ill to travel."

So far on Mr. Lowe's affairs, and now we turn to Mr. Prise and *his*. But on second thoughts, thinking that a detail of a *land* lawsuit might be tedious, we go duth to the result, which, we rejoice to say, was brought off famously by Johnson, and with flying colours.

Charlotte had just finished a work, for which she had been promised a consider-

able sum of money; how delightful were her feelings—how warm the sensation at her heart, to know she was able to render her brother so many comforts! she would not, at the moment she carried her gains in to him—she would not, we aver, have changed feelings that moment with any one in existence.

Lowe had been in terrible spirits all the day, and all the night he had been ill—so ill, that medical aid was required, and Charlotte attended him with great assiduity. The next day he was worse, and the surgeon declared his complaint was of a serious nature. The following week found him no better, and Johnson suggested to Charlotte, he was afraid she might encourage no hopes of recovery.

To die in a prison is dreadful, and Lowe felt it was; had it not been for Charlotte, his *life* there would have been miserable.

One evening, after the surgeon had left him, he raised himself up on his pillow, and, looking steadfastly at his sister, he

said—"Charlotte, I am going to die—nothing can save me; I may live some few days, but I must go at last."

Charlotte attempted to reply, but her speech failed her.

"*You* will most likely see Emma again. I wish you would tell her, I was not so bad as she thought I was; tell her, I thought of her when I was dying. She thought the countess Cestini was criminal—no. Tell her this, Charlotte."

Charlotte could only reply by tears.

"Thank you for all your labours, your kindnesses: few would have been so affectionate as you have been—few but what would have reproached me; but *you*—you I never can thank sufficiently. You and Johnson will be happy together; but, as a last wish, will you write to Emma for me, and I shall feel easier, much easier?"

Charlotte flew out for her inkstand immediately, and begged, when she came back, that Lowe would say any thing he wished, and she would write it.

"But it must not go till I am dead."

"No; every thing shall be done as you wish and request," said Charlotte, tremulously.

"Well then, begin."

Charlotte's tears fell upon the paper.

"You cannot write, I see; to-morrow will do. I hope I shall live till to-morrow."

And Charlotte accorded in this wish most fervently.

She sat up with her brother that night; and whilst he slept, she scrawled a few lines to Miss Ferrars, requesting her, *if she really loved* him *still*, to make no delay, *if* she wished to see him, as he was ill—she feared at the point of death.

Now every body knows, or ought to know, that a ball is a very attractive thing; so thought Miss Campbell, who was trying on, for the fourth time, a zephryne gauze boddice, intended for her *début* at her birthday ball. There was so much delightful bustle below stairs, so much bustle in her own pretty little head, of who would ask her the two first quadrilles;

and her dear friend, Miss Ferrars, had promised to come, because Mrs. Barthop was unexpectedly recovering.

Miss Ferrars; every body loved Miss Ferrars, she was such a pleasing girl.

This ball had been long talked of, and long expected; the charming evening was at last come, and Miss Ferrars was in her dressing-room adorning; she had just finished fastening the feathers in her hair, and was drawing on her gloves, feeling elated at the prospect of innocent mirth before her, when the postman brought Miss Lowe's letter. She did not remember the hand at first; and as the carriage was waiting at the door, she felt half inclined to leave it till a more convenient opportunity. At last she turned it up as she was passing through the hall, and recollected the well-known seal of the pointer. From Mr. Lowe it could not be, though it might be impressed with his arms. But in less time than it was thought possible to even open a letter, she had torn it so as to perceive the contents.

She ran into Mrs. Barthop's apartment as fast as she could.—"Oh, ma'am, Mr. Lowe is dying. I must go—I will go."

"Go! where? Mr. Lowe is nothing to you *now*," said Mrs. Barthop.

"Yes, yes, he is. Mr. Barthop, have mercy; do go with me directly——In London—in the King's Bench *prison*—in a *prison!* I am determined to go; he wishes to see me."

"But at this time of night!" said Mr. Barthop, rising.

"Sir, he may be dead to-morrow. Sir, do go—pray, pray do. A postchaise, a carriage, may be had immediately; we cannot go too fast!" exclaimed Emma, in all the apprehension of revived affection.

"Be calm."

"Sir, I cannot be calm till you promise to go. Be calm! Oh, Mr. Barthop, you cannot ask me to be *calm*."

"But the ball."

"Mrs. Barthop will send some one—any body, to excuse——"

"But explain."

"Sir, I cannot explain till we are off. If you *will not* go with me, I will go alone. I must go."

"Go alone! You must not go alone, Miss Ferrars."

"Sir, as a great favour, as the greatest I will ever ask you, go with me then."

Mr. Barthop put on his great-coat, and Emma burst into tears. Soon they were equipped, and soon were they rapidly proceeding on the high road to London, as fast as four good horses could convey them.

CHAPTER VII.

"I TELL you," said Johnson, getting out of his room as fast as he could, "I cannot nor will not stop another moment, not for twenty thousand pounds. You have detained me till the last minute; so good-day!"

"Well, but this cause, my good sir; the statute——"

"Sir, I cannot talk of your cause to-day."

"Well, but, sir, give me leave, as an old friend, merely to mention one thing."

"If you were my own father, I must disobey."

"Well, sir, I saw sir Henry Lowe to-day in town, going to Piercefield, quite recovered; and that is a piece of news."

"Very well, sir, I am glad of it; now good-morning!" and Johnson actually

slashed off as quick as he could to the King's Bench.

Five minutes brought him to the bedside of Lowe.—"Is he well enough to hear good news, Charlotte?" inquired Johnson.

"Well enough! Do not you think him dying? He is asleep now; but——"

"Do not distress yourself; I really think he *looks* better."

"Looks! But the surgeon will be here in ten minutes; I dare say he will decide."

The report of the surgeon was favourable, and Johnson prepared to tell his good news.—"Come, Lowe, this good news is for you."

"For me! Well, I am glad of it," said Lowe, in a firmer tone than he had been capable of speaking in for some days.

"Yes; the lost deed of conveyance is found."

"Found!" said Lowe and Charlotte, both together.

"Yes. But, Lowe, you seem faint;

another time I can tell you; it is too much for you."

Charlotte flew for a smelling-bottle, and some other restoratives; and at that moment the door softly opened, and Emma Ferrars made her appearance, accompanied by Mr. Barthop. Perhaps with too much precipitation she rushed to the side of the bed. Perhaps those who have never loved may imagine it was mere affectation, her throwing her arms round Lowe, who was still insensible; so it was, however, and Emma was not one of those who made a show of feeling; she spoke to him in language grief like hers only could prompt; but she received no reply.

Confinement, and excessive depression of spirits, had considerably injured Mr. Lowe's constitution; and it was not at all unreasonable to suppose that sudden joy, sudden restoration to fortune, should be productive of the effect it had.

Emma and Charlotte watched every change in his countenance, and happy

were they when, some minutes afterwards, he gave signs that he was recovering.

"How pale, how altered!" exclaimed Emma, bursting into tears.

"Yes; but he is better than he has been. He *may* recover *now*; we had no hopes yesterday. Look, Emma, he wants to take your hand."

Emma gave it; but the words she intended to have spoken died away on her tongue.

Lowe for some time was unable to speak a syllable; at last he seemed better, though weak, and an explanation pleasing to all parties took place. If ever woman freely forgave any man's negligence to her, it was Emma; and if any man repented having been fascinated by beauty (for we can term it nothing else), and merited that indulgence, it was Mr. Lowe.

Matters were comfortably arranged (and *comfortably to* an Englishman is every thing), when Johnson began to elucidate concerning the deed of conveyance being recovered.

It appeared that after Mr. Prise's law-suit was over, Johnson had occasion to visit Piercefield. He was always ushered into the library, and the last time he was there with his clerk, he let fall his pen. Little things sometimes are wonderfully conducive to great ones; however, as he stooped to pick this said pen up, he saw the end of a large piece of parchment appearing out of one of the secret drawers in the small bookcase in the recess—a drawer underneath where the books were deposited, and one he remembered, in his search for the deed, he never looked into, from the best reason in the world, because he did not know of such a drawer.

It was *not idle* curiosity which prompted him to draw it out, but he felt a sort of strange anxiety respecting it. In two minutes he saw all he wanted to know. He would not trust it into any one's hands but his own; but, as fast as it was possible, he came to town, and brought it to his friend victorious.

When Lowe was better, and able to

reflect on the deed's being put into one of these drawers, he remembered a little child, staying at his house, had been corrected by Mrs. Hardwick, and shut up in that very apartment when the papers were laying about; he also remembered he had never seen the deed after that day, and in all probability that little child, by way of amusing itself, had crammed that deed of conveyance into one of the drawers, and then shutting it, it closed with a spring-lock. Luckily the parchment was too large for the drawer, else Lowe might have still been in the King's Bench.

It did not seem so very miraculous to either Johnson or Lowe that the deed had not been discovered by sir Henry, as the library was a room he never visited, being a little bit of a *bon vivant;* and even if he had, no one would have thought of looking *underneath* a bookcase for a secret drawer.

So far so good. Mr. Lowe recovered, and left to the management and ability of Johnson the recovery of his estate. John-

termine; this we are aware of, each took the other, with a firm idea of overlooking various little failings incident to our nature; and in so doing, certainly they made very wise resolutions, for we all know, at best, HUMAN NATURE IS BUT—HUMAN NATURE.

END OF VOL. II.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.